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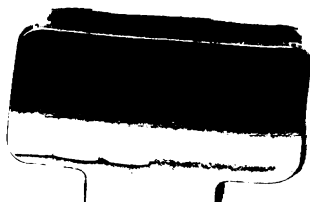
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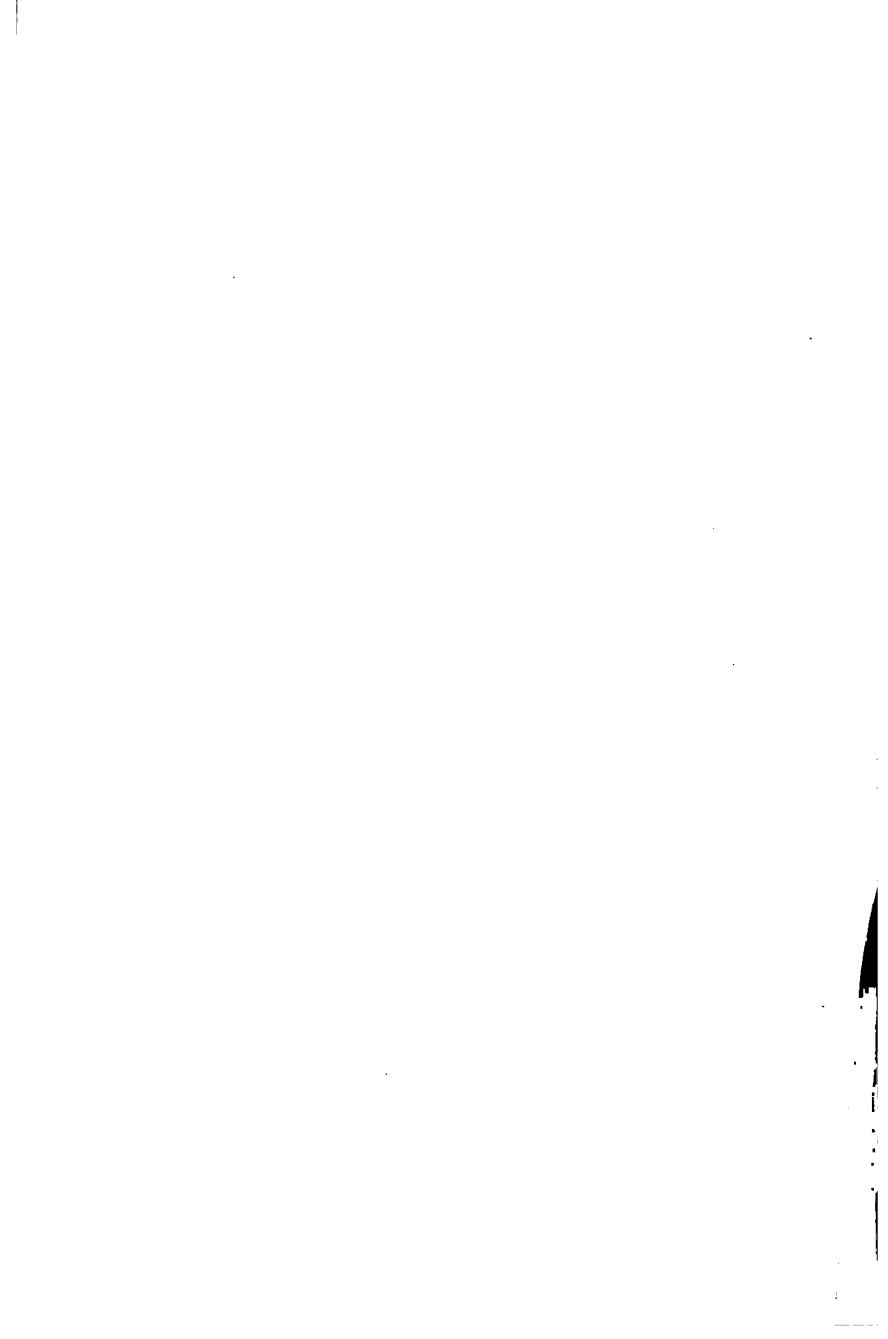
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ESSAYS



ESSAYS

CHIEFLY LITERARY & ETHICAL

BY

AUBREY DE VERE, LL.D.



London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

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1889

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TO
THOMAS W. ALLIES, K.C.S.G.
THESE ESSAYS
ARE DEDICATED
IN GRATITUDE FOR HIS GREAT WORK
'THE FORMATION OF CHRISTENDOM'

ADVERTISEMENT

THE Essays in this volume were, with few exceptions, contributed to the periodicals named in the advertisement to my preceding Essays. One appeared in the *Spectator*, and one in the *National Review*.

“Literature in its Social Aspects” belongs to a series of lectures on literature delivered at the request of Cardinal Newman when Rector of the Catholic University of Ireland. “Church Property and Secularisation” is included because, though it is now too late to recall that secularisation of Ireland’s Church Property unhappily preferred to a just distribution of it, which last measure would have laid the foundation for a constructive not a destructive policy in Ireland, yet the arguments used by me against secularisation in this Essay and several Pamphlets—arguments which elicited but slight response in that country—are, for the most part, applicable not less in the case of England. The secularisation—that is, the confiscation and dis-

solution of her Church Property would probably be the gravest calamity which could befall England.

"Proportionate Representation" is republished in the conviction that the reconsideration of that great principle, as deep as it is simple, to which so many thoughtful men of various opinions and parties had pledged themselves—its reconsideration not in connection with changed party interests, but with social morality and political philosophy—cannot long be deferred if Ireland is to remain a part of the Empire,¹ or if in England a fair trial is to be given to the present experiment of democracy as substituted for that high English polity so long venerated in foreign nations on the ground that it alone had succeeded in reconciling the democratic, the aristocratic, and the monarchical elements of Government.

AUBREY DE VERE.

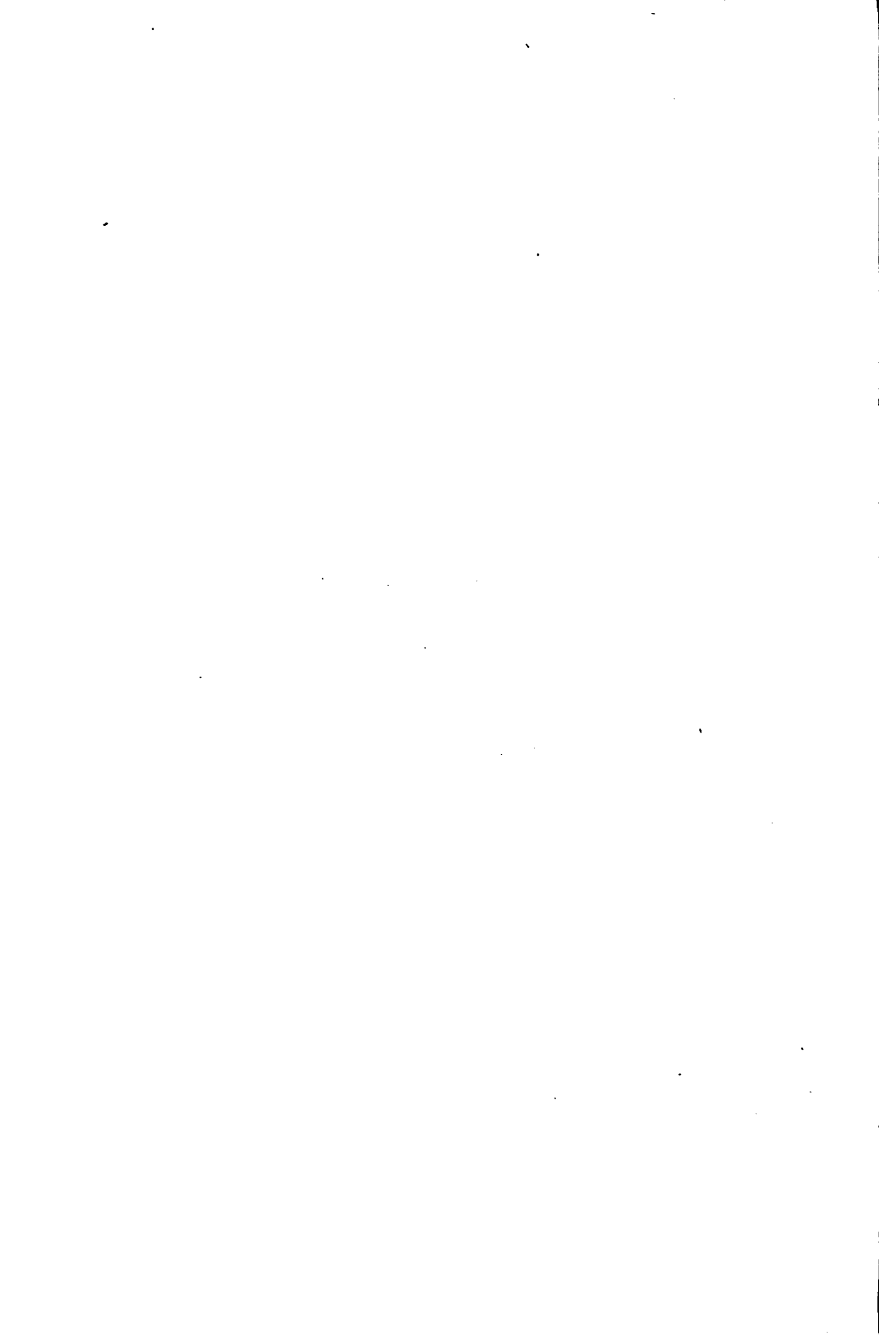
CURRAGH CHASE,

31st March 1889.

¹ The Irish part of this question was separately discussed by me in a pamphlet entitled, "Ireland and Proportionate Representation." Hodges, Figgis, and Co., Dublin, 1885.

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I

SOME REMARKS ON LITERATURE IN ITS SOCIAL ASPECTS

THERE is one section of Social Philosophy upon which less attention has perhaps been bestowed than it deserves, the relation, namely, in which literature stands, not to the individual intellect, but to Social Progress.

There was a time when books constituted a world of their own, and when that world and the world of men were "as kingdoms in oppugnancy." To be a man of letters was then looked upon almost as a monastic vocation. But the cloistral days of literature, whether for good or for evil, are over. Not only do men of the world and men of letters mix in society, but to a large extent the pursuits of each class are of a mixed character, derived partly from study and partly from the interests of life. Literature has acquired a history of its own; and in becoming acquainted with that history it is impossible not to perceive at how many points the literary and the social development

of man have touched each other. These points of contact coincide in the intellectual and the social development of different nations sufficiently to suggest not a few inferences of some interest as regards social philosophy. In many respects such a survey tends to exalt literature in our estimation ; but to exalt it, not so much for what it effects by premeditated effort, as for what it effects unconsciously, as the interpreter of instincts deeper than any which it originates. It brings home to us, above all, the conviction that literature cannot be made to advance in a groove of its own, subject only to its own laws ; that it comes from the heart of human kind, and, for good or evil, gives utterance to all that is deepest there.

As to the vast amount of power exercised by letters in our day, there can be no doubt. That power may be more or less of a spiritual, and therefore of a durable, character ; but it makes itself felt in the present, and does not lack confidence at least as regards the future. A celebrated German philosopher remarks that in ancient times the State was the great power ; in the Middle Ages the Church ; and that to these in recent days we have added two others—commerce and literature. In earlier ages the influence both of commerce and of letters was comparatively local and occasional. In the modern world both influences are permanent, and aspire to become universal. What railroads and steam effect for trade, that popular education effects for literature. Schools and lecture halls and mechanic institutes have lent it

wings. That which belonged of old to the few is now the inheritance of the many. Men are proud of their new possession, and proud for very different reasons. Some see in it a new gift of God to man, accompanied by a new responsibility ; others value it as a human franchise, the result of human energies, and the triumph of natural powers. The religious see in it new means of acquainting man with his duties ; the worldly new means of extending his sensuous enjoyments. In one thing they are agreed, viz. that in determining the future lot of man literature must have a great place ; and consequently that to ascertain its relations to society is a problem not of mere speculation, but of practical philosophy.

We should have no reason to be surprised if we found that, high as are the services and just honours of literature, there is, among many, a disposition to exaggerate both. A temperate estimate of itself is not one of the characteristics of modern Intellect, which resembles a youth who has come too lately into possession of a large estate to appreciate its resources aright. Conscious of great and new powers, it has not had time to learn their limitations. There are some who fancy that the day has gone by when the statesman in his study, or the captain in the field, can exercise more than a seeming power, and that no genuine moral influence survives except that which proceeds from the author's desk. The "Slave of the Lamp" is the divinity in whom they believe. Such an exaggerated estimate of literary power proceeds, of course, mainly from an

inadequate estimate of other things, and especially of revealed religion. The gifts such persons decline to accept from above, they claim as the spoil of human invention. A few years ago multitudes believed in a "reign of peace," of which commerce was the bond, and to which charity need give no help. There are still multitudes who look forward to a state of perfection as a thing guaranteed by the diffusion of general knowledge. To depreciate religion in order to exalt literature is to remove the buttresses and tamper with the foundations of a building, in the hope of raising higher, with the materials thus provided, its pinnacles and towers. The over-estimate of the influence exercised by literature as compared with the power of the State proceeds no less from the intemperate haste of an intellectual movement that has not yet acquired the sedateness of experience.

The "pride of literature," as it has been called, is closely connected with an ignorance of the real dignity that belongs to letters, and the genuine service they are capable of rendering to man. Those who are most infected with it boast much of the influence of books : but they think more of that immediate and palpable influence, which is obvious to all, than of that more spiritual influence which, though it lasts long, rises imperceptibly and diffuses itself slowly. Bentham, not Plato, is the idol of such encomiasts ; and if they can afford a word of praise to Bacon himself, it is only on condition of being allowed to represent that great lover of knowledge as one who valued it only for its physical

aids to man. The pamphlet of the hour interests them more than the philosophic page which lifted up human hearts three thousand years ago, and yet upon whose "lucid brow," as on the sea, "Time writes no wrinkle." The characters which they can spell must be as large as those over shop-doors; and harmonies less obtrusive than those of drum and trumpet are lost on their ear. It is not long since a distinguished man proclaimed in Parliament that the newspaper press was the most useful part of literature. The boldest but speaks what the many think, or what they will think when they come to know their own mind. Such is the degradation that literature must reach if it forgets its fountain-head, which is hidden on the mountain summits of Truth, and if it attaches itself mainly to those material applications which belong to it but incidentally, as, descending from the heights, it irrigates the fields and farms of common life. In the old fable of King Log, we have a type of such exaltations and their consequences. Literature is neither a divinity nor a drudge—converse errors very closely connected.

In casting a glance back upon the history of literature, what perhaps strikes us most is the orderly sequence with which its different periods, characterised in most nations by analogous merits and defects, succeed each other. Were all these periods like the earlier, it would be impossible not to speak of them in words which we should call enthusiastic, if we did not remember how far short even they must fall of our feelings in youth, when first the new world of perdurable

books come in upon us. Amid the fleeting pageants of time the great poems of the world maintain an image of immortality. States, like men, drop back into the dust; that dust takes shape again, and again crumbles into dissolution; but the old Greek's song still pours life into the veins of successive generations in remote and unfriendly climes. Such is the mystery of musical words. The temples that seemed as stable as the quarries of Paros and Pentelicus out of which they rose have melted away like snow-wreaths: yet Achilles lives as when fire flashed from the sightless eyes of the gray rhapsodist, and the youngest shepherd-boy amid the listening group clasped the crook like a sword. Not a picture of Apelles survives, but Helen remains as when her beauty launched the fleets of Greece. Philip and Alexander are gone; their bones lie as passive as those of the broad elephants which, beside the Persian or Indian rivers, once divided the iron ranks of the Macedonian phalanx; but Demosthenes still denounces "the barbarian" as when he took his stand on the pnyx and "in Athens there was but one voice heard."¹ Dynasties have vanished; empires, foreshown to the sad prophet in symbolic image, are no more; hosts beneath whose tread the earth trembled have passed into earth; communities bright and fragile have risen like the flower, and broken like the bubble; yet no word is moved from its order of all those which Cassandra spoke in her madness, and Æschylus recorded. Time reveres that blind old

¹ Landor.

discrowned head of Œdipus as, sitting beside the city gates in the laurel grove of the Eumenides, he bends it forward, listening to the Athenian nightingales. The song of those birds is unchanged; no link has been broken, from age to age, in the chain of the musical tradition. As secure against change is every modulation of that tragic chorus which celebrated their melody.

We enjoy our secure possession almost without memory either of the enjoyment or the debt. Let us try to realise what we should be without it. What if the world had lost the few and precious volumes of early History! To look back on the region of the Past, for us so beautified by the gradations of historical distances, so enriched by the boundary lines of successive ages, so ennobled by the monuments of great events just touched by the sunrise of authentic annals; —to look forth on that region, never fairer than when scarred with convulsions passed away, and to find in it but a waste! There are beings of a more exalted order than man, who abide in a region over which time has no sway; there are races below ours, who live but in an ever-shifting present; but for man to have no history, would be to exist in time, and yet know it only by its discords. The contemplatist would still gaze upward into the eternal and the infinite: but the eye that looks along the labours of man, and fixes itself wistfully on the far horizons of life, would find little to reward its quest.

Still greater would be our loss if deprived of the earlier records of Philosophy. Directly or indirectly,

it is through literature that these have been preserved for us ; and but for them the most deeply interesting parts of literature would never have existed. Problems which for us are solved have for us lost much of their attraction ; we hardly understand how they can ever have presented themselves to the human mind as things of dubious interpretation : yet whole volumes of literature—nay, often of what we call “light literature”—are the memorials of intellectual strivings no longer ours, though labours analogous to them still remain for us. There is a profound pathos in those records of questionings and aspirations in days gone by. Man remembered his birthright, and therefore aspired after truth. No failures could drive him from the investigation ; for he felt that in Truth the issues of his being were involved, and that disappointment in such a quest was nobler than success in meaner pursuits. Christianity had not yet illuminated man’s life ; but with such lights as he possessed, whether derived from reason or tradition, man continued to meditate, and an irresistible instinct made him record his thoughts. The questions which haunted him were ever the same. “What Power is that which whispers Duty in our ears, commanding us to act or to forbear? Human polities, whence come they? what claim have they on our allegiance? Those other beings of our kind, are they indeed our brethren, or are they creatures on whom we may prey?” In many a light song the answer to such inquiries, or rather many rival answers, remains not doubtfully expressed, no less than in the

metaphysical treatise. Half of mythological poetry is but a reply to the questions the heart of man insisted on asking respecting external Nature. If to us some of those strange questionings appear fantastic or far-fetched, it is largely because in an age which science has made secure, and security effeminate, we find our rest in material occupations and conventional pleasures. It has been well observed that we can now hardly imagine with what wonder and admiration Nature affected the mind of man in the early stages of human societies. There are some admirable remarks on this subject in Carlyle's *Hero-Worship*.¹ Such was especially the case in those happier climates of the south, where the bodily organs possessed a marvellous sensitiveness, and where Nature played upon man as upon an instrument. But to admiration speculation soon succeeded. To children the outward world still remains a miracle. To too many of mature age it has become but a machine. We have acquired fixed habits of mind as regards nature. We regard it as a raw material which we are to turn to account, or as a power of which we are, through inductive science, to ascertain the laws. These habits, once established in the general mind of society, mould the intelligence of every member of it, even of those not addicted to science, and consequently exclude the opposite and imaginative habit of mind.

Far other was the aspect under which Nature presented herself to the human mind before the idea of

¹ *The Hero as Divinity.*

physical law had grown familiar. The imagination became her interpreter, whether the interpretation was presented in the form of poetry or of philosophy. In man's poetic moods the torrent could not rend its way down the mountain without wearing the semblance of a Divinity, terrible or beneficent. In his philosophic moods the commonest herb that rose from the sod made him ask himself, "And I—whence do I come?" Poetry was but the flashing eye, and philosophy the brooding brow, of one and the same contemplative Intelligence. The artist may have laboured but to give pleasure or gain sympathy; but Art worked under an imperious necessity of expressing human needs. "What," the human mind was ever asking,—“what is this material universe around us, with all its moving imagery, now remote as a vision, now thrilling us like the limbs through which our life-blood flows? What means it? What relations has it with the Divine? Is it one great whole; or are its several parts disconnected? Does it live? Shall we call it mortal, since all its products fall back again into stillness; or immortal, because from its decay new life, and nobler, is quickened. There is in it nothing solitary, nothing divided. Stream flows to sea; and sea revisits in cloud the failing stream. Nature! Is she finite? Is she infinite? We cannot trace her out. Her circles wind back into each other and are lost. Her harmonies are manifold, and we catch them but in fragments. We, we;—it is we who are the disjointed fragments, not Nature. Is the

Universe, then, eternal as well as infinite, if infinite it be? Is it a God; or is there a God unseen who has created it? Or is it the outward semblance of a Divine Being, a robe of matter which is joined to Him, as with us body and soul are united?" Such were the questions which in all lands asked themselves, and patiently waited for an answer. Such were the strivings of the human mind after Truth. The permanent literature of every age is their memorial. The Greek answered those questions by the legend of Apollo; the Scandinavian by that of Odin, and the Giant race that warred on him.

Not less solicitous was the inquiry when Nature was thought of in her relations principally to man and his needs. "Is not Nature our mother and our nurse? Does she not wonderfully, in darkness, shape us, looking down into our being ere we are conscious of being, as the geometrician bends his brow over his theorem? Does she not breathe into us her own breath; command her mountain marble to pass into herb and air, and build up our bones? Does she not feed us as the panther feeds its young; lure us to walk by her side; send forth her winds to be as wings on our shoulders; and challenge us from crag and cliff? She is far from us, yet gives us strength to follow her voice. She promises to become ever more to us. She discloses herself to us in orderly gradations of Sense, and Intellect, and Soul. In our first days we *felt* her, and only felt her, like an infant lying on its mother's knees, blind and helpless, yet with a vague

sense of protection. Afterwards she woke in us new instincts, and through the windows of growing intelligence communicated herself to us in ampler measure. At first we only heard her singing lullabies above our cradle ; but ere long she put forth her hand, as if from infinite space, and touched our lids, and we looked up upon a countenance awful yet full of love. A third time she imparted herself to us. Infancy and childhood had both passed away : youth had come with its unblunted energies, its generous hopes, and boundless resources. Nature was with us still. She sent aspirations into our soul capable of directing the efforts of the intellect, and controlling the passions of the body. Beneath us we felt the mighty parent, but motionless no more. Singing loud hymns, and sustaining her young brood on her bosom, the Maternal Goddess seemed to ascend toward that heaven of which she sang. Newer knowledge streamed in upon us ; but around us glowed the dawn of a life that seemed to transcend all knowledge." Such were the stages of our advancing estate. The first was the blind infant life of the senses ; the second was that of the mental faculties blended with the animal ; the third was that of spiritual aspirations, sent most abundantly when needed most, and mounting to regions dimly remembered, but remembered as our native place. All the three found a mirror in literature.

But too soon the voice of man's questionings lost its exulting tone. The lessons of Time by itself sound like a sour pedantry ; and the teaching of mere experi-

ence is grievous to those who have not learned from a higher source that, if man is weak, a strength greater than any that Nature can give him is perfected in such weakness, a strength that descends from the supernatural, and alights on the humble. The Pagan appeal to Nature became at last but a reproach. "Is Nature," it murmured, "indeed our mother? Trial fell upon us. We woke as one stunned by a fall, or as the Mænad on the frosty mountain side. Nature helped us not. Her ear was turned on us as a rock in its sullenness. We appealed from her to the Will within us. Youth and its dreams past, there remained the resolute strength of manhood. We scorned to submit: we fought; we conquered. From the adversities of every clime new daring reaped new wisdom. What Nature would not give, we took. We claved open her fields with the plough, and dragged up the increase. We felled the pine, and bridged the sea. The mine yielded us the weapons of our battle with Nature, and the trumpet that sang our triumph. Nature, then, is not our mother, but our slave; and we, what are we? Are we Divinities that rule her;—her wonder, and her worship?" Thus man questioned in every land, and Nature made answer from a million of graves, "Thou conquerest me but through making thyself subject to my laws. The end of my law is death. Descend and question of me in the darkness." Such was Nature's reply as recorded by an Orpheus or a Linus.

There was a time when in such questionings nothing

strange or exaggerated would have been found. Probably every early nation passed through such a stage, if it ever reached to any thing mature or added a bequest to man's inheritance. In literature we find the memorial of these inward strivings. Thence comes its moral significance. Among its great lessons is this—that man is ever the same. It is not improbable that all the modern schools of metaphysics were anticipated by those of Greece before the days of Alexander. The Pantheism of recent Germany had its prototype, as we are assured, in the Ionian school founded by Thales of Miletus: and a more spiritual philosophy, which has its disciples in our day, was anticipated by the Eleatic school founded by Zenophanes. Parmenides asserted the "subjective" character of space and time no less than the modern Germans: Pythagoras anticipated those who found a political system upon theological convictions; and embodied his own in social institutes almost of an ecclesiastical character, insisting upon the close connection between speculative principles and practical life. These anticipations are to be found in the earliest Indian as well as in the Greek philosophy, and it is thus through literature that we learn the substantial identity of the human mind. The Berkeleyan theory respecting matter is as clearly expressed in the Sanscrit hymns as in the treatises of the Irish prelate. To the end of time the lesson will probably be the same. The old Epicureans will always have their followers in materialism, and the Academicians in

scepticism. It has been said that every one is born a Platonist or an Aristotelian : and doubtless, in proportion as the reason and the imagination predominate on the one side, or the understanding and the fancy on the other ; as the faculty that creates or that which analyses is in the ascendant ; as the instinct of the mind is ideal or is dialectic,—thinkers will, however unconsciously, range themselves under the one school or the other.

In preserving the monuments of thought, even on the most abstract subjects, Literature discharges a function graver than that which her votaries often claim for her—a twofold function : she attests the fact that, even in periods we sometimes look on as half-barbarous, man refused to believe that nothing concerned him except what belongs to the senses. Amid all our boasted civilisation, how many there are to whom the dignity and preciousness of Truth are alike unknown ! The World is with them. They believe in her with the faith of martyrs, advance her material interests with the zeal of missionaries, and commonly carry off those prizes which are the just reward of undivided energies. But what shall we say of those who can go no farther than all this ? Nations do not live by bread alone. How do such persons stand as relates to spiritual good ? How as relates to Truth ? They do not deny her existence. They agree that it should be recognised ; nay, that it should be allowed to “reign,” on condition of not “ruling.” Admitted truths are to be enthroned on high—so high,

that their features become invisible. Truths not universally recognised (and only for that reason not regarded as truisms) are to be let alone. All search after them is to be stigmatised under the opprobrious names of speculation or of controversy. At no period and in no country has the love of Truth existed among men self-occupied, or mainly devoted to external things. As much of Truth as chances to receive the "sanction of public opinion" will be nominally theirs : but it is in them only as the motion of a carriage is in a man while he continues to sit in the carriage. It is in them, not of them. Truth does not abide in the temples preoccupied by the money-changers. She haunts rather the ruined precincts of some "creed outworn," where at least a nobler divinity than Plutus was once worshipped, and where, amid Pagan follies and superstitions, some traces yet remain of man's primitive belief and deathless aspirations. How sternly is a practical indifference in the midst of light reproved by the noble industry of great minds, labouring at early periods and under adverse circumstances, to find that truth which its possessors can neither enjoy nor turn to account !

The second function exercised by these early records of man's strivings is one of rebuke, not directed against the indolence but the pride of human intellect. It addresses itself to those who seek Truth but to gratify self-love or extend the empire of Mind. They care nothing for its purity, so only that its apparent bulk may be added to, and by their hands. In their pursuit

of Truth there may be courage and zeal, but there is neither reverence nor fidelity. To the human intellect alone they are loyal : and in each new philosophy they see the regeneration of the world. Such persons stand rebuked by the efforts of the past. They find that human intelligence revolves in the same track, and reproduces nearly the same systems in the same order. They leap forth upon an unknown shore : but the trace of a man's foot on the sand tells them that another has been before them. The same monuments which commemorate the strivings of the human heart confess the limitations of human intellect, and affirm that, while the physical sciences advance by their own energies, in spiritual things man owes his real progress not to Discovery but to Revelation. The same divine hand which imparted to him his natural faculties has been stretched forth again, and, raising him from his low estate, has enabled him to exercise those faculties with added lights, and to advance, with a greater strength, along a higher level.

In an age in which literature aspires to become universal, it is impossible for even the trifling not to perceive that nothing else connected with it is so momentous as the moral relations which it establishes with man. A serious tone of mind is forced upon any one who reflects on this great moral problem. There are many who look upon the subject with despondency. Knowing the manifold temptations connected with books—temptations from which, till

lately, the great mass of mankind have been preserved by the urgency of daily toil and the absence of literary culture—they ask what is to be the consequence when the snares that assail the palace beset the cottage no less? Hitherto, they remark, the lot of the many has been one of physical toil, but of intellectual rest. It has lain in a valley thickset with fair households. On the one side has risen the great mountain range of inductive science, and on the other that of Christian Theology; but the poor man's foot has tarried by the stream that turns his mill, and no one has challenged him to scale the crags. Is all this to be changed? Among books the supply of good and bad will depend on the demand. Which class will the many prefer? Will literature, on the whole, be a nurse of the virtues or a pander to vice? There is neither a rural village nor a mighty city the peace of which will not one day depend upon the answer which time must make to such questions. I can but offer a few suggestions on the subject. Let us begin with the more hopeful.

There are, then, virtues as well as vices which we commonly associate with the few, and which, notwithstanding, sound literature tends to impart to all men of good will. Let us name, for instance, magnanimity. One who ranges among the great men of all ages, and recognises that far-reaching influence by which, silently, unostentatiously, and grasping at no power, they have built up the empire of thought, is less likely than another to join in the stress and strain of petty emulations. He does not need the lordship over a narrow

circle. To him there are sceptres not made of iron or gold, and spiritual thrones, to rest at the foot of which is better than vulgar rule. The remoter power, he knows, is the more permanent. The senate amid which he may, if he deserves it, sit as an assessor, includes all the great men who have ever lived; yet within it there is no clamour and no pressure at the gate.

Nor should sound literature be less a promoter of unworldliness and self-sacrifice. It is the noble bequest of men who gathered up intellectual treasures while those around them snatched at gewgaws, or lay passive in listlessness. It denounces self-indulgence. "Who is he," says the great Tuscan bard,

"So pale with musing in Pierian groves?"

Those whose ears were open to "the whispers of the lonely Muse" were supposed of old to have closed them against the "Lydian airs" of the frivolous or sensual. Literature was thus regarded as a manly art, the foe of luxury, and the inspirer of heroism; while in some languages the very term that denoted a life given to the imaginative arts was that word which meant "virtue." If, in later times, literature has been cultivated but as a means to a selfish end,—if vanity has been the student's stimulus, if an intellectual voluptuousness, more insidious than coarse sensuality, has turned the haunt of the Muses into a garden of epicurean delights,—the loss sustained by literature has punished the wrong. She possesses a healing power; but, like other physicians, she may catch the

malady while she bends over the sickbed. Men of letters have often, and not always unjustly, charged the clergy with learning worldliness from the world they were sent to reform. Their own order bears no talisman against a similar infection. What sense of her genuine functions belongs to a literature which flatters where it should instruct, and flings itself in fawning dedications at the feet of a public more adulated than ever was Oriental despot? For excuse it can but take refuge in wit like Aristippus, who, on being reproved for falling at the feet of Dionysius while presenting a petition to him, replied, "That it was not his fault if Dionysius had ears in his feet."

Servile men of letters are reproved by the very name of the "liberal arts." Such arts are liberal, because, drawing us out from the false centre of self, and the narrow circle of merely conventional interests, they dilate our individual being to the dimensions of a world-wide humanity, imparting to us thus the freedom of "no mean city." In this respect, as in some others, the loftiest literature is a shadow of religion, though the difference between the substance and the shadow is of course infinite, and though the shadow is often distorted by the inequalities of the surface along which it is projected. Contented ignorance is bounded by the senses : Literature breaks down that limit. A shelf stored with books of travel enables the artisan at his daily toil to send forth his thoughts through all lands. A few volumes of history, and Time is to him a grave that has given up its dead. Add a few

volumes of poetry to a few of history, and the present catches all the radiance of the past. They remind us that if the things round us seem to us but little, so seemed to those who lived at an earlier day those things the fame of which has lasted for centuries. They tell us that in the present, too, virtue and genius retain that immortalising touch which changes dust into gems. It is through landscape-paintings that we learn best to appreciate nature, and perceive that weather-stain has its beauty as well as mountain and lake. Thus it is through a Homer or a Herodotus that we learn to understand human life. In every parish there is a whole Iliad of action and of passion, if we have been taught to trace their workings by one of those men whom Nature has chosen for her expositors. Everywhere around us there spreads the Infinite, but we need the optic glass to bring it out. A true book is such a glass: and such a book is now a telescope, drawing the distant close—now a microscope, magnifying what is near. It is thus that nature's largeness is made to break through the limits of our littleness; and that matter, subjecting itself to the interpretation of mind, becomes elevated, as it were, into spirit.

Influences such as these must ever be diffused in proportion as education—an education not based upon vanity—extends its sphere. They work for the many, because they work through those sympathies that exist in all. For the poor and the rich alike there is but one mode of being delivered from the thralldom of

self: it is that of taking interest in things unconnected with self: the negative evil can only be obviated by the positive good. Can any one doubt that a cultivated Imagination helps a moral purpose? It is the ideal power that alone enables us to realise what belongs to the remote and the unseen, and by realising, to love it. If from the far distance of past time objects flash out as with a magic distinctness, like that which, in the evening of a rainy day, draws near to us the mountain-range till bush and scar leap forward to catch the "discriminating touch" of a setting sun, it is not wonderful that our affections too should attach themselves to beings thus suddenly made known to us—beings in whom we descry at once all that we are and all that we fain would be! Which of the virtues is not fostered by this noble emulation? Sophocles, it has been generally thought, can belong but to the few: but it was to the many that he addressed himself. In his most touching tragedy, *Antigonè* is warned that whosoever buries the dead bodies of her brothers shall share their fate. She replies that this mandate is but the law of a tyrant, and that it has never issued from Jove nor from that sceptred Justice which reigns among the Shades;—that she will be true to the dead, and bear her fate. Is her resolve more a lesson of fidelity to the nursling of the palace than to the son of the shepherd, the fisherman, or the artisan? Heroic arms of old cut down the Pelian pines, and dragged the oar all night long through the foam of an unknown sea. Is this more a lesson of courage and persever-

ance to the Arctic discoverer than to the village boy who finds a brave resolution checked by a trivial obstacle? Men read these things, and their physical aspect itself, mien, and step, are altered. A breath from far summits sends strength into their souls. Experience not their own is imparted to them; the heart is made more single; but the mind is made many-sided; and the faculties of the individual are multiplied into those of his kind.

The arts that do these things impart to man the noblest freedom, that of just dependence and true service. In conferring freedom on responsive minds, they confer empire also. We are told that "the meek inherit the earth." They do so doubtless because humble hearts are large hearts, and possess, through love and through the absence of pride and fear, the reality of those serene enjoyments which belong to our universal nature, and which are grasped but in shadow by those who make the world their prey. The enlarging influence of an imagination developed by the higher class of literature does for the intellect of man something analogous to that which a holier power does for him at the depths of his being. It creates a communion of intelligences; it abolishes isolation; it bestows on each what belongs to all: it cannot therefore but abate prejudice, break through narrowness, destroy littleness. All this, we are sometimes told, may yet but create a good the enemy of some higher good. Doubtless it not only may, but must do so if the gift be perverted; but the very adage, *Corruptio*

optimi res pessima est, includes the confession that the gift is good, though the corruption of it be fatal. Fatal indeed is the influence of a literature, however able, which forgets its true vocation, and seeks its reward in what is below, not in what is above it. An allegiance broken is commonly an allegiance transferred. When literature ceases to be the servant of Truth, it becomes the slave of the world, and ministers but to bondage. A touch from the breath of vanity changes what was a "palace of the Humanities" into a splendid prison, and the pictures with which the walls of that palace were once hung are replaced by mirrors reflecting but self-love.

We are thus brought to the less agreeable part of our theme ; but were I merely to "pronounce the panegyric" of literature, we should do it less than justice while I flattered it. It can well afford to discard exaggerated pretensions, and need not conceal its aberrations or shortcomings. Partial views often lead to deeper delusion than statements wholly false : and literature is the first to proclaim that its part in human affairs, though great, is subordinate. Many of the charges brought against it will be found to be such as ought to have been brought only against those who abuse its gifts, usurp its functions, or claim for it what, when sound, it never claims for itself.

What are the censures commonly directed against literature by devout men who fear its attractions and distrust its aids ? It is not on the corruptions of

letters that they descant; for these are accidental: nor do they deny that literature has amassed "much goods," and is as skilful in trading with as in collecting them. Their charge is of an opposite sort. They regard literature as a siren, whose shore is strewn with dead men's bones; as a witch, whose gold is an illusion. "Her wealth," they say, "is our poverty; and the strength she bestows is but weakness disguised. Her spoils are fine, and brought from afar: the silkworm has woven the texture, and the sea-cave added the purple dye. But are these the stores, they demand, which moth and rust cannot corrupt? Might they not rather be called the sum-total of all that virtue has dispensed with often, and wisdom not seldom despised? The heroes who founded or who restored states were men not of arts, but of arms. They were not poets: poets but crept up and fed upon their work, as the caterpillar on the green leaf it destroys. They were not philosophers; they but supplied subjects for philosophy. First nations achieve great things: when that energy is gone, they sing them. Heroism thinks, and acts, and suffers: virtue is silent, or sings but like that bird whose song is its dirge. The Apostles were not, with one exception, men of learning. The highest sanctity is perhaps oftenest reached by illiterate peasants of whom nothing is heard—men who frequented no illusory realms of Fancy, but deemed themselves sufficiently provided for by a world of Duty and a world of Hope. Religion is an abstinent thing: her loftiest temples have often ascended after the devotion

that created them had long been on the wane—the monuments of a faith extinct, not the shrines of a living one.”

This is the truth as regards bad literatures, but not the whole truth; and it is capable of very different applications. The hero comes before the poet, and is the greater poet of the two; for he is the poet in act, not in word alone. He does not lift up his voice, but he lifts up his being: it is his life, not his song, that ascends and draws up many to it. The legislator comes before the philosopher. It is not intellectual systems that he builds up, but human politics, social fabrics, the homes of a people, the fortresses of successive generations. The deliverer who leads forth a rescued nation is nobler than the minstrel who takes the timbrel, one day to celebrate its deliverance, and the next perhaps to inaugurate idolatrous rites. Great deeds are more than great words, because inclusively they are great words—the select and perdurable speech of great nations. Great men are more than great writers; for their greatness is more inwardly theirs, and more diffused throughout the whole of their being. The true poet projects himself forward through the power of imagination, and for the time leaves behind him the meaner part of his nature: the true hero retains the full integrity of his being, and in an unbroken unity of soul is that which the other aspires to be.

These truths are humiliating to letters, and literature has not always acknowledged them, disposed as she often is to identify civilisation with that which is, in

fact, its offspring and its record. The successive periods of literature correspond with analogous periods in the growth of society. The tendency of literature in every nation has been to decline after a certain and early period. An important light is thrown on this fact if we believe that even at the first growth of a nation's literature there had already commenced a decline in some of a nation's moral characteristics. Observing that the earlier period of literature is the nobler, we are tempted not unnaturally to infer that the epoch of social development which it practically represents is likely to have been that one in which morals were purest and sentiment most sound, however defective may have been the more conventional parts of its civilisation. But the inference is a hasty one. Such a social period must have been a noble one : but it may easily be that an earlier one was, in some vital respects, a nobler one still. We often fall into the illusion of counting that age the primitive one in a nation's history, which was the first to speak of itself and leave records behind. Yet it too had a past as well as a future ; and of that silent past the earliest literature is the memorial. The same ascending literature that heralded a new era of society commemorated an earlier one.

It is not merely the instinct witnessed to by the adage, *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*, which makes us attribute a high moral condition to that historic phase in each nation which immediately preceded its literary development. The single circumstance that the

villagers who gathered round Homer appreciated the most perfect poetry ever composed, and, except Shakespeare's, the most thoroughly human, proves that at a very early period there existed in Greece a state of society high as regards refinement of taste, and of which, but for that one memorial of it, we should have known little. That the same period was in its moral relations comparatively a sound one, is implied by the many natural virtues illustrated by Homer's poetry, by a general purity the more striking from its unguardedness, and by the absence of all allusion to vices common in the subsequent ages of Greek society. Something like this is to be found in the earliest literature of most countries. A character of greatness, generosity, and innocence belongs to it, the mere appreciation of which by contemporaries indicated tenderness, magnanimity, and a majestic simplicity. Later ages, indeed, have often not retained enough of these qualities to enjoy the literature of the earlier period. Their critical discernment may have been clear enough to recognise its greatness, so far as verbal acknowledgments go ; but the many, while they acquiesced in the traditionary verdict of Fame, were in practical harmony with those later and inferior works which their sympathy indirectly produced. If, then, the earlier period of society illustrated by literature was morally the nobler, it seems difficult to sever that age from one earlier still, the greatness of which by necessity found expression in its offspring. The earlier writers of each nation generally extol an earlier

age, as one compared with which their own was degenerate ; and it seems an arbitrary proceeding to attribute such expressions merely to a melancholy fancy.

Let us test this remark by the case of Italy. Dante may be looked on as the beginning of true Italian literature ; and in him it reached a greatness which in more prosperous, and in some respects more civilised periods, it could neither surpass nor sustain. In his *Divina Commedia* we find perhaps the most splendid union of deep thought and soaring imagination which the world has yet produced. That poem is the great exponent of the Middle Ages, embodying all the lore of the scholastic theology, in union with countless interests, legendary, political, and personal ; while it is characterised also by a style seldom approached, either for grave strength or for severe grace. Even the party-spirit of a small community, the fiercest perhaps of passions, could not long keep that poem in obscurity ; and in a few years Florence had founded a professorship for the exposition of the work of him whom she had made an exile. His prayer had been granted ; and the song which had "made him lean" for many a year, bade him at last stand up beside his baptismal font in the old baptistery—then not old—and claim the poet's crown. The age for which such a work was written, and which appreciated its greatness, must have been a great age, however rude in some respects ; it must have possessed a moral depth, a spiritual fervour, and an imaginative refinement, such as have not characterised later ages during which the descendants

of those who crowded round Boccaccio, as he lectured on Dante, hardly knew that the mighty bard had ever lived. Yet Dante repeatedly assures us that his age was a degenerate one. Conversing in the *Paradiso* with his ancestor Cacciaguida, the latter bitterly contrasts the morals of Florence with those of his earlier day—

“ Florence within her ancient limit-mark,
Which calls her still to matin prayers and noon,
Was chaste and sober, and abode in peace.
I saw Bellincion Berti walk abroad
In leathern girdle, and a clasp of bone ;
And with no artful colouring on her cheeks,
His lady leave her glass.”¹

He describes the domestic life of Florence before the age of frivolity had set in—

“ One waked to tend the cradle, hushing it
With sounds that lulled the parent’s infancy ;
Another with her maidens, drawing off
The tresses from the distaff, lectured them
Old tales of Troy, and Fiesolè, and Rome.
A Salterello and Cianghella we
Had held as strange a marvel as ye would
A Cincinnatus or Cornelia now.”²

Yet the society of Dante’s time had escaped some social vices, as would seem from such lines as these, referring to detraction—

“ And as the unblemished dame, who in herself
Secure of censure, yet at bare report
Of other’s failing, shrinks with maiden fear,”—

an assumption upon which later poets could hardly have ventured. That the age which produced Dante,

¹ Cary’s translation of Dante, *Paradiso*, Canto xv.

² *Ibid.*

with all its intellectual advance, was yet morally inferior to the preceding age, is certainly what we should infer from his poetry.

In our own literature Chaucer holds a position analogous to that which Dante, different as is the character of his genius, occupies in Italian. In him we see the stately foundation laid for a period of English poetry which exists, alas, but in that unfulfilled promise. Of the fabric which must otherwise have been raised upon that basis we were deprived by the Wars of the Roses, and the barbarism which that struggle bequeathed. Chaucer is, among us, the representative Poet of the Middle Ages ; but the best in them had passed away when he wrote. In his works we recognise two ages : a past one, with all its chivalrous splendours and ecclesiastical solemnities ; and again a very different age which was at hand, and of which the indications are to be found chiefly in his humorous poems—an age in which, with the great towns, the commerce of England was springing up, a commerce destined subsequently to bear so great a part in that battle fought by the people of England against that Oriental despotism founded by the Tudors on the ruin of the old nobility and the ancient Church. The poet of Edward the Third's court and Philippa's bower does not let us forget that the age in which he lived was a great age ; but he reminds us also that "the bright consummate flower" had already begun to shed its leaves. To us his age, like his verse, wears ever a youthful and vernal character : but the evening

twilight has much resemblance to the dawn ; and that age was the evening of a time in some respects nobler still. Two generations had elapsed since the last of the crusades ; and the last had been very different from the first. When a few more had passed away, nations which had rushed to arms to free the Holy Sepulchre and rescue Christian captives, could not unite in their own defence. The Eastern empire fell. The West looked quietly on while the Crescent supplanted the Cross on the summit of the first-born of Christian cathedrals. She trembled for herself. Vienna was saved by the princely son of that land which now groans beneath a barbaric yoke ; and Europe scarcely escaped the domination of the Moslem. An earlier period than Chaucer's was a sounder one, though it had less to say for itself, and though its monuments are to be found less in books than in those mighty piles, wind-wasted and weather-stained, which still lift up their courses of "lonely stone into the region of sailing cloud and silent air."¹

So in Spain. The age of the chivalrous virtues, to which many a noble ballad bears witness, had long passed when Calderon built their monument. So in ancient Italy. A Camillus, a Regulus, a Cornelia—these had become but names when Virgil and Horace rose, and

"Palatinus sighed

Faint echoes of Ionian song."²

Horace indeed sings the moral decay with just anger,

¹ Ruskin.

² Shelley.

if not without a touch of that imaginative pleasure with which we note the advancing tokens of mortality in an autumnal wood. He admired virtue truly, but his delicate ear was well pleased also by her voice when the cadence was dying away in distance. If there existed a literature in the severer days of Roman morals, it survived but in that legendary lore with which Livy enriched his history; lore which, if untrue in its details, was founded in truth, and only continued to live because it expressed the higher spirit of the early Roman state.

Many persons perhaps would concede that the age which precedes that of literature, in the development of society, is superior to any that follows it as regards the hardier virtues, but yet rejoin that it is inferior in refinement. They would point to the ceaseless wars of early times, and to deeds of atrocity at later times rare. But this is a delusive test. The most terrible cruelties were enacted in ages which are not by any means *characterised* by such crimes. Where the best men abound, the bad will inevitably become the worst to be found anywhere. They became the worst in a large part by their resistance to the special opportunities then existing for the development of virtue. Morally and intellectually the character of an age is to be inferred rather from its higher specimens than from its lower. The character of the worst is no doubt an important element in the analysis; but it is from that of the best men, especially if they were held in contemporary honour, that we can make

the safest inference. An early, and in some respects barbaric, time does not care, like later times, to hide its defects ; its greater crimes lie upon the surface of its annals ; and to suppose that they represent the age is as though we were to seek an average exponent of a later time in its police reports, taking no notice of its less obtrusive traits or its permanent institutions. In spite of its wildness, it is especially by imaginative refinement and moral tenderness that a primitive age is characterised. Whence but from this source proceed that reverence, modesty, and courtesy which belong to such an age, and which, when extinct elsewhere, we often meet among the rural poor who live on traditions, and in ranging among whom we seem to have passed into an earlier century ?

The essential refinement of periods which were coarse indeed as well as refined, but which neither boasted of its refinement nor concealed its grossness under a specious disguise, is proved to us by the literature of those periods. The true test, however, is the positive, not the negative, one. The question is, what period showed the highest imaginative and moral refinement by the strongest evidence—not what period was most careful to shun or to gloss everything of an opposite character. The latter is a question of consistency, and neither nations nor individuals are consistent. To apply the test : Is not Shakespeare, with all his strength, quite as much distinguished from the poets of a feebler day by his light touches—

hair-strokes they might be called—of tenderness? In whom do we meet such a delicate implication, such a graduated expression, a reticence so eloquent and suggestive, so nobly modest a reserve? What is it that especially characterises our ballads, composed for the poor chiefly, and the delight of an early age? It is their exquisite, though unconscious, pathos, even more than their vigour,—that fine, though careless, handling, compared with which the most laborious imitations are clumsy. A better illustration of the subject cannot be found than in old Chaucer. It is true that he is often most censurably coarse, but this is chiefly when treating low or humorous themes. His was a large nature; and in a large nature, if it be not held under discipline, there is often room for much evil. But the loftier region of his poetry is marked by the most opposite character. Where his subject is a high one, there is no English poet either more simply or more subtly refined. Whoever has read the versions of Chaucer, made more than three centuries after his death by Dryden, must have been struck by the superiority of the early bard in this respect. The coarser passages are brought into prominence in the later versions, and divested largely of the humour which is a partial veil to them in the original. The refinement and pathos of other parts are all but lost. These qualities belong still more eminently to Dante, in spite of his austerity, and what has been called his cruelty. Notwithstanding the stern deeds with which they abounded, the times

which appreciated those qualities in Dante and Chaucer must have had a very remarkable degree of imaginative refinement; and that they actually possessed it a proof is to be found in the other arts beside that of poetry. To apply this. If, in spite of advancing civilisation, such qualities, beside the other moral characteristics of a simple age, declined, it can hardly be but that the moral and social decline must have begun at an earlier period. The first-class poets are above their age; but we can see, notwithstanding, to what extent they could count on its sympathy and appreciation, and no less the degree in which they were dragged down by its infection.¹

It may be asked, how it can happen that in the age of the greatest moral soundness a nation does not make at least a beginning of its literature? But might we not as justly demand why those ages during which literature advances are not necessarily ages of advancing virtue? The earlier age has nobly done its part by indirectly causing what it has not actually produced. That a moral decline, though not without revivals, takes place, no one doubts: the only question is, when it begins. It must have been at work a considerable time before it was perceived; and during that time all

¹ Among the better signs of this age we may count the many translations of Dante and editions of Chaucer which have appeared in it. Among the latter may be named an excellent work, edited by Mr. Charles Cowden Clarke, the friend of Keats, under the name of *The Riches of Chaucer*. It is intended for popular reading, the metre being accented, the spelling modernised, and obsolete words explained; while those passages are not included which Chaucer repented of having written.

that produces literature may have been at work also with an energy equally unseen. That in other respects there is an advance—that the political and intellectual energies of a nation make progress at periods subsequent to that in which its moral heart was soundest—cannot be doubted.

Authors may be offended, but literature is not disparaged by the supposition that its upgrowth is most often immediately subsequent to a nation's highest period of moral excellence. It would follow, indeed, that society can do without books, but not that it can dispense with that which inspires books, and much less that it could recover virtue by discarding letters. Supposing the principle in question fully established, it is capable of two opposite applications, and of these the sounder one is anything but sad. If a high moral condition exists before it illustrates itself in literature, it does not assuredly exist in vain. It exists because the same virtuous and fruitful spirit, of which literature becomes in time the legitimate offspring, has embodied itself in forms yet more exalted—in a life magnanimous and plain, in large sympathies, in pure manners, in heroic toils, in useful institutions, in religious rites. There is surely something cheering in the thought that an early greatness existed which needed and sought no fame, and that the ancestral claims of great races date back to a term earlier than they suspect. There is something not out of harmony with a spiritual philosophy in the belief that the merit which wears a conspicuous crown is yet but a token of another merit

less within the ken of the senses, and protected by the veil cast over it. Poetry and the other arts are not less virtuous arts because they derive their inspiration from an influence at once so potent and so inward that it can sway great communities before it manifests itself in books, marble, or colour. The glory diffused by that influence may have become greater when its power has become less. It is after the sun has set that the heavens are enkindled above it.

No doubt this is a statement which should be qualified. In thus speaking of literature, we speak, in fact, but of a part of it—the only part which has been faithfully transmitted to us. We must here distinguish between two stages in the early growth of literature. There is a stage when it becomes conscious of its greatness, and takes thought for its own preservation. There is a previous stage in which literature has scarcely disengaged itself from the ordinary offices of life, and in which the minstrel no more knows that he sings than the shepherd-boy that he whistles. This primitive literature, if it be not a solecism so to designate what has existed independently of written letters, commonly disappears after a life more or less long of oral transmission, and survives chiefly in its effects. Doubtless at this early stage literature may well be supposed to have coincided with the manliest period of a nation's existence, and before any moral decline had begun. The oral era of poetry must ever have preceded that of books. We know that it did so in Hellas. The Grecian literature that dates from

after the Persian War is, we must remember, but its surviving portion. Long before that time Greece had been rich in minstrelsies which have not descended to us, and most of which were probably never committed to writing. Whether the art of writing existed among the Greeks till centuries after the death of Homer, is a matter of dispute.

That his works should have survived seems almost a miracle; and that many works analogous to them, if not equal to them, perished, admits no doubt. The two great poems of that early age which remain to us remind us, as Landor remarks, of those that oblivion has covered, as rocks that rise above the surface report of continents buried beneath the sea. The only one of his contemporaries, or immediate successors, of whom anything has been preserved, is Hesiod; and he, like Homer, derived his mythic lore from bards whose very names we have never heard. The cyclic or epic poets who succeeded Homer and Hesiod, during a period of several centuries, were numerous. Of their works we know no more than that they embodied the early history of the Greek states, and recorded the fortunes of heroes and demigods—of Hercules, of Theseus, and of the Argonauts. When the epic poetry ceased, the early lyric poetry arose. It, too, existed for a long period: it embodied in mystic hymns the earliest traditions of the Grecian, and probably of the Egyptian, temples; it tracked the progress of the Hellenic race through the changing fortunes that shaped its various communities; and yet of all its schools—Æolian,

Ionian, Dorian, and Theban—we retain almost nothing. We know little more of them than their names. Arion and Stesichorus sang, we are told, choral strains, out of which tragedy, at a later day, took its rise. Archilochus caught his inspiration from political passion; and Alcæus not less—

“ ‘Woe, woe to tyrants!’ from his lyre
 Broke threateningly in sparkles dire
 Of fierce vindictive song.”¹

Ibycus, Callinus, and Sappho,—these and many more such are to us little but names. Their songs were part of the early Grecian life, and with it they have perished. Their authors probably no more thought of a literary immortality than an eloquent converser or preacher does now. They sang from impulse, or to serve some immediate moral or political end—a circumstance not wonderful at that early period. Tyrtaeus and Terpander² were in the strictest sense politicians. In the Dorian states the character of poetry was regulated by law; so little original was the maxim of the modern philosopher who exclaimed, “Let who will make the laws of a country, so I may make its songs!”

If we have lost so much that belonged to a time later than that of Homer, what chance had earlier minstrelsies of surviving? The verses that once most deeply moved their hearers frequently perished because the language was not, in their day, fixed in a per-

¹ Wordsworth.

² See Thirlwall's *Greece*, vol. ii. p. 124.

manent shape. In the absence of a language tolerably matured, the poet is as the sculptor with imperfect tools, or the architect with a bad quarry. The great poets, it is true, have sometimes formed a language : but if they had come a little earlier, they would have found no material sufficiently coherent to take a permanent shape. This circumstance would of itself suggest as probable that a developed literature belongs to a period later than that when society was morally best qualified to produce it. But what inference are we to draw from the fact? Not surely that society would never have lost its youth if literature had not taught it to grow old. As well might it be said that we lose our infancy by cutting our teeth. A nation's heroic time must pass away in any case. If it be followed by literature, it is at least by the heroic age of literature, which takes its themes from the age gone by, adds to them the radiance of the imagination, and far from hastening the evanescence of a noble time, prolongs its stay, and provides its substitute. Our grievance is but one of the "sentimental" order. To abolish literature by way of restoring a greatness which preceded it would be to clip the wrinkles on the face of one debilitated by disease, instead of feeding him up to restored strength, and thus renewing the wasted flesh. Literature has its three distinct periods, which correspond with those of social development. Let us glance at these. It begins by being a Vocation or an Art ; it becomes subsequently a Profession ; in its decline it sinks into a Trade.

The earliest of these periods is the noblest, because it is the one least detached from actual life. Men sing of the great deeds their fathers wrought, and in which they themselves in boyhood had perhaps a part: but daily the connection between literature and action becomes less close; and society is either affected by that change, or, from other causes, undergoes a similar one. We are told by the great master of the human heart that the native hue of resolution becomes "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Hamlet, the man of contemplation, when forced into action, is found wanting: he can moralise every trifle; but every trifle can make him defer action, and he ends by acting from accident. It is thus with nations too. A spell seems sometimes to lock up their energies after that period when the literary intellect has attained, not only a large, but a separate development. For many years one of the chief Continental nations was constantly referred to as an example of this weakness.

I use the word "separate" as well as "large," because this weakness, national or individual, does not proceed so much from intellectual development as from the circumstance that the intellect, during its development, is apt to separate itself from the moral powers; so that the man is weakened by that which destroys the unity of his being. The first-class men of action, heroes, conquerors, legislators, are always, it should be remembered, men of thought also; but men of thought inclusively, not exclusively. Their

intellectual processes may be conducted with more or less of consciousness ; but all their actions are founded on a solid judgment, and directed by a piercing foresight. The converse proposition does not hold equally good ; and the man of thought does not, whether consciously or unconsciously, often include the man of action. He is therefore a smaller being than a first-class man of action ; for, though a larger range of objects presents itself to his intellect, he yet himself includes a smaller number of those faculties, moral and intellectual, which are the constituents of human nature. There is also less greatness in him in proportion as there is more consciousness of greatness. He loses that simple power through which the "men of old," as a true poet tells us,

"Went about their gravest deeds
Like noble boys at play."¹

To the man of action he stands in a relation like that which criticism bears to poetry. The power that analyses sits in judgment over the power that creates, and does not know that it is but a separated section of that great creative mind. Nations often lose in energy as they gain in thoughtfulness—a circumstance which renders one that has retained somewhat of barbaric strength and unity of action not a little formidable to its more peaceful neighbours. But the change is far from being caused exclusively by literature, or being exclusively injurious. It often averts a worse evil than it brings. Without it the light heart

¹ Lord Houghton.

might more often be lost without the grave mind being won.

“Of all low ways that worry, vex, and weary us,
 Preëminently two there may be reckoned :
 The first of these is trifling with things serious,
 And seriousness in trifles is the second.”

When the season of buoyancy departs, that of seriousness comes perforce ; and if the culture of high literature did not aid those influences which turn that season to a better mood, it might more often degenerate into that seriousness about trifles from which levity on grave matters is the dreary recoil.

It is not, however, when literature advances to its second period that it most ennobles the serious mind. It is itself thoughtful : but its thoughts have lost their solidity. Here again the individual is the interpreter of the social body. The different classes of thoughtful men differ from each other as much as the man of thought differs from the man of action. We find one class of men whose thoughts are substantial and vital, moulding their being and determining their deeds ; we find another class whose thoughts, no matter how beautiful, or even profound, are but barren thoughts, and produce no more effect on the mind through which they pass than the reflection of clouds produces on the water through which they seem to move. The thoughts which inspire a vigorous literature are those which have been quickened by experience, not those which rise out of a region of pure abstraction. They are connected with actual life

by the bond of action or suffering. Action and suffering, not abstraction, bequeath experience, and experience communicates reality to thought. The thoughts thus produced bear on them the likeness of the soul, and therefore preserve a family resemblance to each other. They may be few in number, and they are slowly matured ; but they possess the consistency of life, and they enlist strong sympathies. With the other and more abstract class of thoughts it is different. They cost little and bequeath nothing. They are but ciphers without a unit to stand before them.

Here, then, are two classes of thoughts. Which should we expect to predominate in the earlier, and which in the later, period of literature? The order is the same as that which we find in the growth of society itself. That earlier literature which has scarcely separated itself from life is that which possesses solidity of thought. The consistency of sincerity belongs to it. Its mirth is as earnest as its pathos. It comes from the heart, and goes to it. At this period books are looked on with reverence, as human souls embodied ; nay, as truth itself, militant or triumphant. At a later period, literature would be embarrassed by such tokens of respect. It claims far other merits. Its pride is in its versatility. It prefers aspects and phases of truth to truth full-faced, and looks on reality as its rival. It has lost its hold both of fact and of the ideal ; and is thus separated from truth by two removes. This is the period when books multiply, and knowledge is mapped out into provinces,

but when men are moved no more. It becomes an understood thing that authors are too clever to mean quite what they say, and that, however conclusive a statement may seem, the opposite one might be made to appear conclusive no less. Opinions take the place of convictions, and views of opinions. Literature acknowledges a dependence neither on faith nor on nature. She has set up in her own name and become a Profession. She copies the great works of antiquity, or re-combines their elements. She exposes their faults, but cannot catch their inspiration. Her hand has precision, and her taste is good; but her work cannot rise above the academic.

There remains to be noticed the third period of literature, which, however low it may be, knows how, with the aid of a little plunder from better times, to trick itself out to advantage. It is the decline. The period of thought divorced from moral vitality is succeeded by that of words divorced from thought. "A man full of words shall not prosper:" neither shall a nation or a literature. A time comes when literature pours itself forth on all the winds, and means nothing. Here and there it has learning; but its learning is undigested; its precision is but pedantry; and what passes for originality proceeds not from depth, but from paradox, or from the circumstance that the writer seeks but to gratify curiosity, chronicling trifles which it was not worth while to observe. We speak with contempt of the Eastern

opium-eaters, and do not know that in reading such books, remote from all truth, we are opium-eaters in our way, contented if a gay imagery passes before a vacant eye, and unweeting of the avenging debility. A portion of this literature embodies a nation's day-dreams, another its gossip. One of its types is to be found in the lower newspapers; while the higher newspaper press lavishes such a remarkable amount of real ability and strenuous purpose on "leaders" by necessity ephemeral.

Whoever has been thrown, during a rainy day at a country inn, upon a file of some clever newspaper belonging to the less respectable class, can hardly fail to have learned something. He has been amused finding so much more skill than he knew to have been thus spent. He has admired the tact with which the reader's interest has been kept up from day to day: the rumours circulated to be contradicted, but never contradicted till a new one had been provided; the clever disquisitions resting upon a baseless hypothesis; the art with which brilliant illustrations of past history were woven into a context with which they had no relation. He has seen the petty scandal of the hour blown to the dimensions of a political philosophy or a theology, and replaced by another with still brighter hues, when the last bubble has burst. He has observed the culinary skill with which an article, which was first served up hot, was a week later made to do duty cold, with the aid of a little fresh garnish; the ability with which a single truism was expanded

into a column of letterpress, while yet a concise style made each sentence, apart from the rest, seem to burst with significance. He has noted the craft that guided a popular sentiment which it seemed to follow, or that followed where it was supposed to guide. The work was never allowed to lose its freshness; something was always reserved for the morrow; and each day had its infinitesimal portion of real news spread over tracts of letterpress large enough to paper the walls of Bedlam. The man of anecdote drew his nets alike from the nearest servants' hall or from foreign courts and camps, and affirmed that in his pilferings was to be found the fate of the civilised world. The philosopher provided his theory to prove the party nostrum to be a profound discovery, or change the popular appetite into "simple modesty." The moralist did the virtuous indignation with dignity; and the prophet had his vaticination in time and tune. Every one had played his part with a considerable share of self-respect; but a great conspiracy had, notwithstanding, been carried on against truth. Each contributor had worked as much from some strange sympathy with the vast machine of which he was a part, as for pay. The world was deceived; but that was because it was more anxious to be deceived than any one was to deceive it.

Is this exaggeration? Literature sinks low in proportion as its pretensions are high, from the moment when it proves false to them; and with all its parade of high functions, it may easily subject itself to influ-

ences scarcely nobler than those which determine the character of the newspaper press in its ignobler forms. A book of metaphysics may be but the battle-cry of a faction, and a history in many volumes but a party-pamphlet in disguise. Novels, or works that bear the name, may introduce the reader to company as low as the theatre could have introduced him to at its vilest period. The religious problem may be placed in the hands of the penny-a-liner, and its solution be illustrated by the caricaturist. Gossiping memoirs may but "lend corruption lighter wings to fly." Literature may become but the servant of a nation's humours, or of her curiosity. Society having got into a morbid state, literature has to sympathise with morbidness. With the melancholy it must be melancholy, ever implying that the universe was made by mistake. Like the attendant of a wealthy hypochondriac, it must know how to talk of every symptom, tread the deep carpet noiselessly, and draw back the curtain pensively, not letting in a sudden light on a temple consecrated to all the maladies. It must prove that society is ill-used; and enlarge on the fact that the richer the nation grows, the more loudly a certain formidable class announces that it is starving. It must be caustic on foreign morals, and apologetic as to our own. Punctual to the hour, books and pamphlets must come by hundreds, stuffed with the novel theory and the jest that has "the sanction of antiquity." Hardly an incident in Church or State that does not admit of a humorous exhibition, if the

adept has but learned the art of tossing it, and then catching it on the reverse side. The tourist shuns antiquities and arts, but preserves in amber his bill of fare and the witticisms of the *valet de place*. Philosophy laughs like a monkey; but the mirth means neither gladness of heart nor a sense of the humorous: it is a stereotyped affectation implying nothing but a fixed resolution to see nothing seriously. The effete cynicism looks down upon all things with the same stolid eye and from the same imaginary elevation.

The picture is a sad but not necessarily a hopeless one. Whence comes the evil? Even the lightest species of literature is obliged, by an inner law, to delineate with fidelity that society of which it is the exponent; only its fidelity is that, not of the compass, but of the weathercock—faithful but to the fleeting breeze, and telling the truth of that in which the truth is not. It may increase the evil which it illustrates, but in the main it must be regarded as a symptom rather than a cause. Its ordinary cause is to be found in the condition of society; but it may proceed also from maladies more near the surface and less difficult to deal with. The triumph of literature itself produces some of the evils it has to contend with. The number of readers has grown immensely large; the necessary consequence is, that there gradually comes into existence a vast book-trade, ruled by the ordinary commercial laws of supply and demand. Now there are objects enough which may become legitimate matters of barter; but thoughts are not of their

number; and when that sinks into the commercial which was meant for higher things, the commerce becomes among the lowest that exist. The evil is increased when the wholesale or retail dealers in it are called on, not to meet intellectual needs, but to provide intellectual luxuries, cosmetics, and trinkets. The flimsier the merchandise, the more unscrupulous will naturally be its vendors. Another cause for the evil will be found in the large number of writers who are now drawn to literature by vanity or the instinct of imitation. The aids and appliances of knowledge have multiplied: dictionaries, grammars, and careful editors have thrown the gates of ancient learning back on their hinges; and translations have made all literatures of one tongue. The natural consequence is that multitudes are called authors who, with great powers of expression, have nothing to say. They began without genius, found subsequently none of those wholesome difficulties by rubbing against which inferior faculties acquire a fine edge; and as literary vanity gains upon them, they seek in affectation or exaggeration the originality denied to them by nature. It has been truly said that improvements in the medical art have an indirect tendency to make the human race degenerate, by keeping alive multitudes of sickly children, who become the parents of the next generation, but who, in an earlier period of the world, would have died off in infancy. It is thus that bad books generate worse, until the swarm appears less the offspring of living intel-

ligence than an insect race generated by intelligence dead.

So long as the impaired condition of literature results only from special circumstances inherent in a particular stage of society, not from a decay of its moral energy, there is room for a better order of things. In the midst of ephemeral letters real books still rise up: for a time they are lost in the crowd; but it dies off from them at last, and they emerge. These could not have survived, had not the spirit of life been strong within them; and they are often in a remarkable degree free from conventional vices. To produce them their authors are compelled to have recourse to deeper principles than prevail in their own day, or in times near theirs: the consequence is, that those works, while belonging to what I have called the third period of literature, often resemble those of the first period more than those of the second, as a man often resembles his grandfather more than his father. While such books appear, the struggle is still going on between the two spirits that rule the age; and as the higher spirit or the lower one prevails, literature must rise or fall. Indirectly its battle is fought by whatever imparts to society, especially amid dangers and difficulties, a more manly heart, which has always the finer sensibilities, and a deeper mind. The merest drudgery that ever vexed genius, if it imparts strength or exacts self-denial, contributes to the elevation of literature more than all the patronage of wealth or protection of academies. In proportion as vanity,

effeminacy, and self-occupation cease, intellectual labour will become more attractive, and idleness resume its less noxious forms. Idleness in the fields, or idleness among neighbours, is visited by many a healthy and genial influence ; but the idleness of those who are always breathing the exhausted air of books intended but to amuse the idle, debilitates and destroys. Literature throws off its diseases chiefly by a recurrence to wholesome food and wholesome exercise. However beset by modes and fashions, the aspirant may ever turn his eyes back upon that one great model of all genuine art—Nature.

The following remarks may fitly find a place here. They are extracted from my preface to a book published in America :—

We are sometimes told that, in our day, Poetry which does not affect the “sensational” must not hope to be popular. The “sensational” includes several schools, the worst of which is that one which is sensual as well as sensational. The fanatics of this school declaim about Passion ; but they mean by the word little more than Appetite intellectualised. Far other was the meaning of Milton, when he described Poetry as a thing “simple, sensuous, and *impassioned*,” for it was he who characterised specially the stately and severe Greek Tragedy, as “high actions, and high *passions* best describing.” Neither did he use the word “sensuous” in opposition to that lofty doctrine of Bacon, who affirms that Poetry “subjects the

shows of things to the *desires* of the *mind*." Milton but intended thus to contrast Poetry with Science, which last has been well said to draw up the exterior universe into that of Thought and Law, whereas it is the office of Poetry to embody the interior world of thought and feeling in palpable form. The great master of Inductive Philosophy was here Idealist; while Milton, the great Idealist, confessed, perhaps against the tenor of his habitual sympathies, the objective character of Poetry; but these two authentic canons of criticism set forth but the same philosophy as regarded from two opposite points of view, the one asserting that the soul of Poetry is Mind, the other adding that for that soul a body exists also.

Let not the Sensationalists of the sensual school imagine that Passion is their characteristic. It belongs to their narrow domain neither exclusively nor inclusively. True Passion finds its sustenance everywhere—in every joy and woe of humanity—in the faith and patience of oppressed nations, and no less in the cry from the lonely hearth.

False Passion, in its ultimate development Sensuality, loathes all food but carrion, and destroys all that a sane heart reveres. It ignores the affections and values the passions themselves but for the mud turned up by the storm. Its wit is maliciousness, and its humour but the pretext for license. It blots even from material nature her beauty; for it abolishes, in its gross delineations, all her variety and harmony of expression, as well as all that gradation which metes

and measures human enjoyment. Resolving all things into the senses, it stultifies the senses themselves, which for man have no true existence except in so far as they receive and give forth their stores subordinately to man's higher Powers. It overruns whatever is fresh, and tramples down whatever is sweet. It rushes over God's fair creation like a conflagration, licking up those innumerable half lights and half shades, precious alike in their reserve and their disclosures, through which the beauty of Nature is rendered infinite, and her bounty inexhaustible. It leaves behind it nothing but blackness and barrenness. It may content itself with the suggestive, and conceal beneath the whitened outside of decorous language the implication that dares not be named ; or it may boast that it is natural, because it has renounced faith in the primary instincts of our moral nature that it may celebrate animal instincts in language that knows itself to be naked, and is not ashamed ; or it may endeavour to galvanise dead Art with the spasmodic tricks of spurious Science, exhibiting the malformations of depraved fancy, or of nature disnatured, in psychological poems and philosophic " Etudes," revolting as those anatomical eccentricities ranged round the walls of a museum :—to such achievements it may rise ; but it has forfeited all heritage in the two great homes of authentic poetry—man's heart and the universe of God. The sensual-sensational cannot plead the excuse of a tender weakness. It is essentially the heartless. In it the pathetic has no part. To feel anything it must have

nails driven into it. In it Love has no part ; for it has broken loose from that Reverence which is itself but Love shrouded beneath her sacred and protecting veil, and from that moral sense from which, and not from the animal nature or a blind and self-willed caprice, the genuine human affections are outgrowths. In it the imagination has no part—that large and free imagination which aspires to breathe the spiritual into the material, not to merge the former in the latter. In her forest-pleasaunce there remains not a tree that is not branded nor a spring that is not brackish.

Literary heresies, like religious, attract at first through their supposed originality. “Sensationalism” in this form—for I do not speak of that which offends only against refinement—fancies that it has discovered a new sort of “muscular” literature. It is new in nothing but the circumstances which aggravate the offence. The better time of Paganism itself was a reproach to the inferior times of countries nominally Christian ; and it was only when the higher genius of the ancient world had been blighted by bad morals and materialistic despotisms, that sensuality usurped upon its literature. Cast down from its Pagan throne, and remanded to the reptile form, it worked up again even in the ages of Faith, creeping back into the precinct made pure, and blending, in a half-merry, half-mystical libertinage, the higher thoughts of a chivalrous time with the renewed revolt of fallen nature. To what extent the corrupt element in the Fabliaux, Tales, and Troubadour songs of the Middle Ages

defrauded the world of that complete Mediæval literature of which the *Vita Nuova* was the snowy bud, and the *Divina Commedia* the half-opened flower, we shall probably never know ; but what Dante did, Boccaccio and the writers of the *Novelle* undid, and in Chaucer's poetry a dark stream ran side by side with the clear one. For a long time a childlike Faith made head against a childish instability and inconsistency as to right and wrong ; but by degrees the loftier element evaporated, while the coarser residuum remained behind. In ages of less simplicity the same evil again and again recurred, marring the heroic strength of the Elizabethan drama, scattering plague spots over the dreary revel of Charles the Second, and in France pushing aside the Bossuets and Racines, and sealing a large part of literature, by its own confession, against the young and the innocent—that is, against those who, owing to their leisure, their vivid perceptions, quick sympathies, and unblunted sensibilities, can best appreciate what is beautiful, best profit by what is ennobling, and best reward, by innocence confirmed and noble enjoyments extended, the great writer who has ever regarded *them* as his glory and his crown.

II

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH'S POEMS

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH, not long before his lamented death, published in two volumes a new edition of his poetical works¹—a welcome gift to many who had read in their youth, alike with delight and profit, the poems written by him in his youth, and a bequest which will be valued most by those who are attracted by the spiritual element in poetry, when it is in no degree divorced from human sympathies. His religious poetry is of an order special to himself, and among contemporary "Anglican" poets he will probably be one day regarded by many as the best. Certainly there was no other who combined with a devout spirit so much not generally included in the term religious poetry; none who penetrated into so sound a vein of philosophical thought, or who derived his themes from such varied sources. To the minor, but not unimportant graces of poetry, such as metrical

¹ *Poems*. By Richard Chenevix Trench. New edition, two vols. London: Macmillan and Co. 1885.

perfection, the labours of an ecclesiastical career probably allowed him to pay less attention than he would otherwise have bestowed on them, though they did not prevent him from continuing to write poetry in his maturer years, and write not less ably than in earlier days. His literary career began when the age occupied itself in an unusual degree with religion; and it was its first fruits that his poetic mind dedicated to spiritual themes. In his first volume, *The Story of Justin Martyr*, the poems specially Christian are not only the more numerous, but are obviously those most entirely spontaneous. They are expressions of emotions as much as of thoughts—emotions that mated themselves with whatever met his eye as he moved through the classic lands illustrated in that volume.

One of the chief characteristics of Archbishop Trench's poetry is its intense seriousness—a seriousness which, even in his youthful poems, would evidently have been sadness but for that lustre thrown on his estimate of man's lot by the hope of a higher life. Apart from a "clothing from above" they must apparently have worn for the poet a perpetual shadow—not one cast on them by the pessimism connected with the cynical spirit, but with sensibilities too keen for a world of chance and of change. Except when the sensibilities possess an elasticity equal to their intensity, the humanities take not only a sober but a sombre colouring. The shadow of the tomb rests on them, and the air around them is filled with warning

voices. Poetry has its temperament as well as its spirit. The temperament of his poetry is melancholy and saturnine: its spirit, on the other hand, is buoyant. The result of this union is that the cheerfulness which belongs to his most characteristic poems is predominantly that of consolation. It is often, indeed, the sunbeam of the churchyard, and the bird song echoed from the ruin. His poetry is essentially that of reality, and reality has its sad side. Byron, the gloomiest of modern poets, despite his bursts of wild mirth, calls Crabbe, though Nature's darkest painter, "yet her best." Archbishop Trench's picture of life might have worn a graver sadness if his spiritual belief had not been as bright as Cowper's Calvinistic creed was depressing. The duty of poetry to be an inspirer of hope is insisted on in the "prefatory lines" prefixed to his earliest volume. It is hers, he asserts, to speak

"Of light from darkness, good from evil brought
By an almighty power, and how all things,
If we will not refuse the good they bring,
Are messages of an almighty love,
And full of blessings. Oh! be sure of this—
All things are mercies while we count them so;
And this believing not keen poverty,
Nor wasting years of pain or slow disease,
Nor death, which in a moment might lay low
Our pleasant plants; not these, if they should come,
Shall ever drift our bark of faith ashore,
Whose steadfast anchor is securely cast
Within the veil, the veil of things unseen,
Which now we know not, but shall know hereafter."

The same conviction is expressed in the noble

Spenserian stanzas which serve as an introduction to his second volume,¹ and affirm the kinship of poetry and faith. They address the former—

“In my life's youth, while yet the deeper needs
Of the inmost spirit unawakened were,
Thou couldst recount of high heroic deeds,
Couldst add a glory unto earth and air,
A crowning glory, making fair more fair :
So that my soul was pleased and satisfied,
Which had as yet no higher, deeper care,
And said that thou shouldst evermore abide
With me, and make my bliss, and be my spirit's bride.

“But years went on, and thoughts which slept before,
O'er the horizon of my soul arose—
Thoughts which perplexed me ever more and more ;
As though a Sphinx should meet one, and propose
Enigmas hard, and which whoso not knows
To interpret, must her prey and victim be ;
And I, round whom thick darkness seemed to close,
Knew only this one thing, that misery
Remained, if none could solve this riddle unto me.

“But when no longer without hope I mourned,
When peace and joy revived in me anew,
Even from that moment my old love returned,
My former love, yet wiser and more true,
As seeing what for us thy power can do,
And what thy skill can make us understand
And know—and where that skill attained not to ;
How far thou canst sustain us by thy hand,
And what things shall in us a holier care demand.

“Though now there seems one only worthy aim
For Poet—that my strength were as my will !—
And which renounce he cannot without blame—
To make men feel the presence by his skill
Of an eternal loveliness, until
All souls are faint with longing for their home,

¹ *Sabbath*on, etc.

Yet the same time are strengthened to fulfil
Their task on earth, that they may surely come
Unto the land of life, who here as exiles roam.

“If in this quest, O power of sacred song,
Thou canst assist—oh, never take thy flight !
If thou canst make us gladder or more strong,
If thou canst fling glimpses of glorious light
Upon life's deepest depth and highest height,
Or pour upon its low and level plain
A gleam of mellowed gladness, if this might
Thou hast (and it is thine), then not in vain
Are we henceforth prepared to follow in thy train.”

Not long after the publication of his first volume the poet learned that it had imparted serious aid to several persons who, when appalled by the “Sphinx's enigmas,” had not taken refuge in an ignoble indifference. Among them was one of his college friends, the author of the *Lawyer*, who to the end continued faithful both to his Christian convictions, and to the principles as regards legal practice sustained in that book and vindicated by Lord Macaulay against Lord Brougham.

So far as Archbishop Trench's poetry is to be placed in the class of religious verse—though it was by no means confined to that category—it is curious to observe how different it is in character from that of the Oxford poets, Keble and Williams—the former of whom helped so much in the creation of the “High Church School,” while the poetical works of the latter, and especially his *Baptistery*, possessed also high poetic merit, and exercised a kindred influence. Dean Milman belonged also to the University of

Oxford ; but his poetry represented an earlier time, and related less to religious themes. Archbishop Trench belonged to Cambridge, not Oxford. In those days, more than half a century gone by, the marvellously ecclesiastical aspect presented by Oxford was but a type of the spirit which pervaded that "ancient and venerable University," and had received an additional stimulus from the excitement occasioned by Catholic Emancipation. The spirit of Cambridge was a different spirit : its most eminent representatives were not Patristic Theologians—they were men more often famed for scientific acquirements, such as Whewell, Airy, De Morgan, and Sedgwick ; or for high classical scholarship, like the Hares. Among the students were Alfred and Charles Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, Richard Monckton Milnes, W. Brookfield, John Kemble, Arthur Helps, Frederick Denison Maurice, and many besides—afterwards honoured names. These men cared little for Fathers or Schoolmen, but a great deal for Wordsworth and Coleridge, Goethe and Schiller, Kant and Schelling. The "Humanities" were more to them than scholastic lore, and metaphysical systems than Theology. These were the men with whom the future Archbishop chiefly associated ; and though in his subsequent poetry a strong sympathy with "High Church" principles is to be found, yet the religious spirit of that poetry retained largely a character impressed upon it probably by earlier associations. It was pre-eminently human-hearted in its intellectual part, brooding and

questioning, and occupied with interests extending over a wide range. In Jewish, Mahometan, and even Pagan legends he found a spiritual significance; while, in such poems as his "Lines written on a Picture of the Assumption by Murillo," he evinced a higher sympathy with the devotional mind of the Middle Ages than is to be found in the Oxford poets. His poetry remained always free from partisanship and from that most unpoetical of all things, the polemical spirit.

To pass to his secular poetry. The "Prize of Song" is among the happiest specimens of his classical legends, and is so unlike his Christian legends as to mark in him a versatility rare in religious poets.

"Challenged by the haughty daughters
Of the old Emathian King,
Strove the Muses at the waters
Of that Heliconian spring—
Proved beside those hallowed fountains
Unto whom the prize of song,
Unto whom those streams and mountains
Should of truest right belong.

"First those others in vexed numbers
Mourned the rebel giant brood,
Whom the earth's huge mass encumbers,
Or who writhe, the vulture's food;
Mourned for earth-born power, which faileth
Heaven to win by might and main;
Then, thrust back, for ever wailleth,
Gnawing its own heart in pain.

"Nature shuddered while she hearkened;
Through her veins swift horror ran:
Sun and stars, perturbed and darkened,
To forsake their orbs began.

Back the rivers fled ; the ocean
Howled upon a thousand shores,
As it would with wild commotion
Burst its everlasting doors.

“ Hushed was not that stormy riot,
Till were heard the sacred Nine
Singing of the blissful quiet
In the happy seats divine ;
Singing of those thrones immortal,
Whither struggling men attain,
Passing humbly through the portal
Of obedience, toil, and pain.

“ At that melody symphonious
Joy to Nature's heart was sent,
And the spheres, again harmonious,
Made sweet thunder as they went :
Lightly moved, with pleasure dancing,
Little hills and mountains high
Helicon his head advancing,
Till it almost touched the sky.

“ —Thou whom once those Sisters holy
On thy lonely path have met,
And, thy front thou stooping lowly,
There their sacred laurel set,
Oh be thine, their mandate owning,
Aye with them to win the prize,
Reconciling and atoning
With thy magic harmonies :

“ An Arion thou, whose singing
Rouses not a furious sea,
Rather the sea-monsters bringing
Servants to its melody ;
An Amphion, not with passion
To set wild the builders' mind,
But the mystic walls to fashion,
And the stones in one to bind.”

This poem is a real addition to the stores of English lyrical verse, elevated as it is in thought, and

expressed in language though occasionally careless, yet more corresponding with the dignity of the theme than more elaborate diction would be. As a statement of what the poet should seek it is a Greek supplement to the stanzas on poetry previously quoted. Those stanzas affirm that poetry should ever rise in spiritual aspiration; the "Prize of Song" insists on the solidity which should belong to it no less. The spire should be lifted on the tower, not stand on the ground.

"Orpheus and the Sirens" is another fine specimen of the mode in which classical themes may be handled in a Christian spirit. It records the expedition of the *Argo* to Colchos in search of the Golden Fleece.

"Nor Orpheus pass unnamed, though from the rest
Apart, he leaned upon that lyre divine,
Which once in heaven his glory should attest,
Set there, a sacred sign :

"But when auspicious thunders pealed on high,
Unto its chords and to his chant sublime
The joyful heroes, toiling manfully,
With measured strokes kept time.

"Then when that keel divided first the waves,
Them Chiron cheered from Pelion's piny crown,
And wondering sea-nymphs rose from ocean caves,
And all the Gods looked down."

Their perils surmounted, the Fleece won, and their homeward journey nearly accomplished, the warriors are suddenly called on to encounter the greatest of their dangers. The Sirens' Island lies before them; its fragrance is wafted over the waves, and with it the

song inviting the sea-worn mariners to endless enjoyment exempt from all duties. The beach is whitened by the bones of those who have yielded to the seduction; but the warning is in vain, they steer inland. Suddenly Orpheus seizes his harp—

“Of holier joy he sang, more true delight,
In other, happier isles for them reserved,
Who, faithful here, from constancy and right,
And truth have never swerved ;

“How evermore the tempered ocean gales
Breathe round those hidden islands of the blest,
Steeped in the glory spread, when daylight fails
Far in the sacred West ;

“But of pure gladness found in temperance high,
In duty owned, and revered with awe,
Of man's true freedom, which may only lie
In servitude to law ;

“And how 'twas given through virtue to aspire
To golden seats in ever-calm abodes ;
Of mortal men, admitted to the quire
Of high immortal Gods.

“He sang—a mighty melody divine,
Waking deep echoes in the heart of each—
Reminded whence they drew their royal line,
And to what heights might reach.”

The song triumphs, and the heroes reach their home.

Among the Christian Legends one of the best is entitled “The Monk and the Bird.” The renunciation of all worldly ambitions and domestic ties has cost the Monk nothing ; his happiness increases as the years go by, for his mind finds rest in one thought—

that of the "Beatific Vision" reserved for the Just. At last a dreadful doubt assails him and, in spite of all his efforts to discard it, pursues him, alike amid the splendour of conventual offices, and when meditating in his cell. That doubt is whether the unvarying glory of that transcendent Vision must not become one day a weariness to a mind such as man's. As he walks in sad musings he is attracted far on into a wood by the mystic singing of a bird.

"He heard not, saw not, felt not aught beside,
Through the wide worlds of pleasure and of pain,
Save the full flowing and the ample tide
Of that celestial strain."

He stands enthralled, as he supposes, for an hour, and then returns to his convent. The old faces fill it no more; three generations have passed. Later the new monks place him in his former cell, and thrice his early happiness is his once more. It is tempered by a single doubt—

"Lest an eternity should not suffice
To take the measure and the breadth and height
Of what there is reserved in Paradise—
Its ever-new delight."

A note informs us that more than one German poet has dealt with this legend. In origin, however, it is not Teutonic. The late Professor Eugene O'Curry, in his invaluable *Materials of Ancient Irish History*, refers to a very early Irish manuscript in which it is extant.

Another legend, "Gertrude of Saxony," is, as

stated in the note to the first edition, to be found in the eighth volume (p. 355) of the *Bibliotheca Ascetica*—a collection by Bernardus Pezius of scarce religious tracts pertaining to the Middle Ages. It is characterised by that mixture of simplicity, sweetness, and unconscious grace which belongs to the best mediæval legends. St. Gertrude rides with a goodly company towards an Alsatian convent. As they traverse a vast and houseless plain the evening closes around them, and refuge there is none. Suddenly a palace of vast size and surpassing beauty stands before them. Its countless doors and windows lie wide open, and within are stored all things needful for human use ; but inmates they see none.

“ But when they for a season waited had,
Behold ! a matron of majestic air,
Of regal port, in regal garments clad,
Entered alone—who, when they would declare
With reverence meet what need had brought them there
At such untimely hour, smiling replied,
That she already was of all aware ;
And added, she was pleased and satisfied
That they to be her guests that night had turned aside.

“ And ere the meal she spread for them was done,
Upon a sudden One there entered there
Whose countenance with marvellous beauty shone,
More than the sons of men divinely fair,
And all whose presence did the likeness wear
Of angel more than man : he too with bland
Mild words saluted them, and gracious air ;
Sweet comfort, solemn awe, went hand in hand,
While in his presence did those wondering pilgrims stand.

“ Then turning to that Matron, as a son
Might to his mother speak familiarly

He spake to her—they only heard the tone,
Not listening out of reverent courtesy :”

In the morning the travellers pursue their journey, and when they have gone but a short distance they turn to take a last look at that palace. It is no longer to be seen ; and later they learn from the nobles of that land that on that plain neither palace nor house has ever existed.

“ Thereat from them did thankful utterance break,
And with one voice they praised His tender care
Who had upreared a palace for their sake,
And of that pomp and cost did nothing spare
Though but to guard them from one night's cold air,
And had no ministries of love disdained ;
And 'twas their thought, if some have unaware
Angels for guests received with love unfeigned,
That they had been by more than angels entertained.”

Archbishop Trench's poetry, however freely it may deal with the ideal world, yet never leaves reality far behind it. The ordinary conditions of our mortal lot may be transcended in the ideal ; yet it is then that the solid truths which lie at the base of human existence are most effectually presented to us. He has—an unusual charge—more of imagination than of fancy, the latter faculty being less often found in association with serious thought and earnest purpose. The imagination deals alike easily with elevated themes and homely themes—what repels it is the conventional ; and the absence of this in Archbishop Trench's poetry is one of the proofs that his poetic

vein is authentic. That authenticity is indeed severely tested by the extreme plainness of its diction, which it must be owned is sometimes carried to exaggeration. If it rebukes poets who have an opposite fault, those poets might retort that there exists a degree of plainness which has about it an ostentation of its own, and "tramples on the pride of Plato with a greater pride." Wordsworth once remarked laughingly of a young poet whose diction he regarded as too rich, that if "Crabbe's poetry and his could be blended it would make excellent bread and butter."

Though very many among Archbishop Trench's best poems treat secular subjects, the most characteristic are those on religious—a circumstance which has perhaps been injurious to their popularity. Even among religious persons religion is often regarded as a subject unfit for verse. Except when strictly limited, that condemnation is surely a hasty one. No doubt secular themes will always, and justly, remain far the most numerous subjects for poetry; but it may be true not less that religious subjects are, in their measure and degree, perfectly suitable also; nay, true besides, that the theory which disparages them inflicts a serious injury, less on religion than on poetry, ignoring its affinities to much that is greatest in man, arbitrarily restricting its range, and tempting both poet and reader to value disproportionately its lesser functions, and to ignore not only its spiritual capabilities, but also its social and moral offices. That theory is therefore one worthy of examination. It will be

admitted that there exist all but inaccessible highlands in theological science, and that the reader of poetry cannot be expected to breathe "the difficult air of the iced mountain top." It is equally certain that there are doctrines, and also facts, belonging to religion which, though not too recondite, are too sacred for detailed poetical illustration ; and that even well-intended attempts thus to illustrate them have often had an alloy of over-familiarity, if not of coarseness, repulsive to refined minds. But this means only that religious themes have to be selected and handled with discretion. A great poet has told us that "Truth hath her pleasure-grounds," and Religion has also her regions in which things divine and things human range freely together. These are the regions which the religious poet may best adventure upon ; and even the pagan poets, though they sang of their Gods, did not sing of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In early Christian times there was a *Disciplina arcani* for religious teachers ; and religious poets will do well to respect a similar law. There is room enough for them outside its limit. Puritanism indeed attacks a religion larger than its own for not confining itself to the so-called "essential things ;" but authentic religion is not a trim garden, but includes a world of mountain and dale—otherwise much in man's nature must have remained unconsecrated ; and poetry, like painting, should avail itself of this largeness.

Congregational hymns, of course—at least those in modern languages—are seldom poetical. If they were

largely so they would often be less fit for devotional purposes. Neither can even the success of Dryden, "the Bacon of the rhyming crew," as he is called by Landor, ever persuade us that religious controversy, such as his *Hind and Panther*, gains by the controversialist choosing to do battle in singing robes; but there are abundant forms of poetry, as, for instance, the philosophical, to which the same objections do not apply. Philosophical poetry, when of a high order, has been often admired, even when the philosophy is of the materialistic—that is, of the least poetical order; and the Platonic philosophy is so essentially poetic that Milton, in a magnificent but little known Latin poem, admirably translated by Leigh Hunt into the metre of the *Penseroso*,¹ adjures Plato, since he insists on banishing the poets from his ideal Republic, to practise what he preaches, and himself to head the band of exiles. Can it then be maintained seriously that philosophy would cease to be a fit theme for poetry if it became Christian philosophy—that is, if the imaginative Reason were to add to its stores, derived from meditation and from experience, those yet more luminous truths which have become man's heritage through revelation? Keats finely expressed what countless men must have felt when he said, "Beauty is truth; truth beauty:" is it to be believed that truth has no affinity with poetic beauty, except when that beauty is earth-born and returns to the dust; or that poetic beauty can have no relations

¹ It is entitled *Plato's Archetypal Man*.

with truths which bear witness to the immortal and the infinite? There is little temptation to this narrowness. Is the rural and sylvan landscape abolished because it has a mountain boundary? On the contrary, its softness is enhanced by the contrast. Should the mountains include nothing above the limit-line of perpetual snow? On the contrary, it is above that line that we have, though not precipice and ravine, yet the richest colour, the most exhilarating lights, and the most majestic outlines. Nature's world has "many mansions," and so has that of art—a world not to be clipped by the dogmas of a criticism with vivid perceptions, but bark-bound sympathies.

Not less narrow is the allegation that poetry should confine itself exclusively to secular themes when it deals with narrative. The themes of the *Iliad* and the *Æneid* were well worthy of song, the former recording the fall of a guilty State, the latter the foundation of a great State by a royal exile; but the nobler of these epics had large dealings with the Gods as well as with the heroes of old time. Were the *Paradise Lost* and *Jerusalem Delivered* unfortunate in their subjects? Few will affirm this. Those subjects had their imperfections and limitations, but so have all poetic subjects; and if the battle of angels is above the limit of poetic art, the Catalogue of the Ships is beneath it. Heroism is heroism no less if the city besieged be the city of David, not the city of Priam; and if the heroism of Greece was naturally excited by a desire to wipe out the opprobrium cast upon it by

the flight of Helen, a true poet might see something as calculated to stimulate the chivalry of Christendom in a war waged to replace the Cross on the churches of Jerusalem and to deliver Christian captives from Mahometan dungeons. The whole range of human action and passion, whether directed to evil or good ends, lay open to the Christian narrative poet as well as to the pagan; the Paladins of Charlemagne were as brave as the Greek chiefs; and the affianced wife of Roland, who died on hearing of his death, was as loyal-hearted as Andromache.

The difference between the religious and the non-religious theme is often that the former includes all the conditions and resources of poetry to be found in the latter, and adds to them others besides. It comprises a special range of human affections not found elsewhere. It exhibits, in addition to all that belongs to mere human nature, many ascending grades of moral nobleness; and for the most part the more advanced the character is in spirituality, the profounder, though not the more absorbing, is that human tenderness which can only reach its full development through the extinction of self-love. It is in the Christian types of character alone that we witness those graduated lights and shades produced by the blending influences of nature and of grace. Have they no significance? Let us turn to such creations as Chaucer's St. Cecilia, Griselde, and Constance, or to Spenser's loveliest characters. Did Una, who devoted her life to the restoration of her

deposed parents, lack household affections because she had affections higher still? Had she no human love for the champion who had undertaken her cause and then suspected and deserted her? Was it insensibility which induced her to bring him to the "House of Holiness" and restore him to virtue and honour? Were Spenser's bandit chiefs less naturally described because they stood in contrast with Christian warriors leal and true? Characters at once heroic and of a high spiritual order are the "flowers of the tree," and their fragrance is not destroyed, but is the more delicate, because they wave in a higher air.

It is sometimes said that saintly characters are too like each other for poetic illustration. This is an *a priori* judgment, not fact. Even a careless reader must have observed how strikingly distinct are the most saintly characters in the New Testament, notwithstanding all that they have in common. This unlikeness is remarkable in authentic religious biographies. The saint of contemplation is essentially different from the saint of penitence, or of apostolic zeal, or of humble laboriousness. It is with characters as with faces: on a first acquaintance we sometimes hardly know one member of a family from another, for the family type is all that has caught our attention: by degrees we grow to observe the individual traits, and then we marvel how we ever saw any other. In poetry, whether the characters illustrated are ordinary men or saints, we discriminate only when we have grown intimate. To a boy the warriors of

Homer seem much alike because they are all courageous ; but a thoughtful reader perceives that in each warrior courage is a different virtue from what it is in others, not to speak of qualities blended with that of courage. Among the wise there are many different sorts of wisdom, and among the virtuous many types of virtue. If to the merely secular intelligence all saints look alike, it may be that to saints all the worldly look alike ; but in both cases a mistake is made ; and poetry is not called on to renounce the larger delineation of human character in deference to mistakes.

The drama, it should be owned, is an exception to these remarks. A saintly character may be introduced into a play, as in the instance of Massinger's *Virgin Martyr*, and the main drift of a drama may embody an elevated moral teaching, as it commonly does in Shakespeare's tragedies ; but the drama is so much occupied by the collisions of violent passions, that although Aristotle claimed for Greek tragedy the special function of purifying the heart through the influences of pity and terror, our own must be regarded as that department of poetry, the sphere of which lies farthest apart from that of religion. For this, however, lyrical poetry makes ample amends. In it poetry mounts on wings, and her heavenward flights have frequently been amongst her noblest, whether as regards strength or grace. It has proved so both in ancient times and modern. The Psalms have been read far more frequently than any other part of Holy Scrip-

ture, except the Canticles and a few other passages of the New Testament ; and the highest classical and Oriental literature abounds in religious odes often the most vigorous and apparently spontaneous expression of the antique imagination, as well as the most precious memorial of national traditions. If any part of ancient poetry sprang directly from the heart of the people it was this. The Latin hymns of the early Church were the delight not only of the ages that produced them, but of late times ; they were the last poems that soothed the deathbed of Walter Scott. Petrarch's religious poetry came as plainly from his heart as his love-sonnets. Spenser's hymns on "Heavenly Love" and "Heavenly Beauty" rank with his noblest and most characteristic poems. The works of Herbert and Crashaw abound in lyrics equal to the best of the age they belong to ; and the Elizabethan era bequeathed to us a large mass of true poetry, alike intellectual and imaginative, on religious themes—the works especially of the Beaumonts, Habington, Daniel, Southwell, and Dr. Henry More. The best of Drummond's touching sonnets are religious. Milton's magnificent Christmas Hymn makes us lament that he did not resume at a later period that sister song on the Passion which he laid aside, as he has touchingly recorded, from an impression that his years were not yet sufficiently mature to cope with a theme so high.

It has been the same in recent times. Wordsworth's finest poem is that which elects for its theme the immortality of man—

“Trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our Home.”

Coleridge's hymn, *Mont Blanc*, is perhaps the grandest of his poems, though not the most characteristic. Shelley's most spiritual, earnest, and beautiful lyric is his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, rightly so called, since it embodies what was nearest to religious thought attained to by him, and therefore includes what is perhaps the only expression of humility in his works—

“Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.”

Byron's *Hebrew Melodies* rank high among his lyrics; and among his other most poetical passages are some few which, without ostentation, indicate at least occasional visitations of strong though vague religious feeling. Those parts of his poems which scoff at religion, like others of a cynical character, are invariably unpoetical. In the other countries of Europe, religious poetry has fully equalled in poetic merit the highest specimens of secular. In Italy it has surpassed them; and, as Kenelm Digby remarks, if the highest place among poets must be assigned to Shakespeare, the highest among single poems would probably by good judges be accorded to Dante's *Divina Commedia*. Nor is it little remarkable that in that pre-eminently religious work the two latter portions—viz. the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso*—are immeasurably more poetical than the *Inferno*, notwithstanding that the last-named concerns itself so

much more with secular interests, and challenges attention by several well-known passages of exceptional power. The *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, indeed, are not only richer than it in imagination and intellect, but also in pathos and tenderness ;—witness the meeting of the poet with his remote ancestor, Cacciaguida. In Spanish literature the greatest poet, Calderon, is also the most religious ; and in his own day his most popular works were those *Autos Sacramentales* so rapturously praised by Augustus Schlegel and by Shelley. The admirable translations of them by Denis Florence M'Carthy enable the English reader to form his own judgment on their merits ; as do some fine fragments by Archbishop Trench. It is thus that the latter expresses his opinion of Calderon's *Autos* :—

“ He (the reader) will be filled, I fear not to say, with an endless admiration and astonishment at the skill of the poet in conquering the almost unconquerable difficulties of his theme, at the power with which he masters and moulds the most heterogeneous materials. . . . Add to these merits the gorgeous poetic diction, wherein he clothes the flights of an imagination for which nothing is too bold, which dares to reach all worlds ; while, most wonderful triumph of all, he is able to impart even a dramatic interest to that which, whatever other merits it might acquire in its treatment, might have seemed in its very nature incapable of this merit. . . . It is not too much to say of the larger number of these marvellous works that they are hymns of loftiest praise to Redeeming Love, summonses to all things which have breath to praise the Lord ; and he too writes as one who has seen Satan fall as lightning from heaven, and rejoices in spirit with his Lord.”¹

Such criticism, as well as the Archbishop's remarks

¹ *Calderon: an Essay on his Life and Genius*, pp. 98, 100. London : Macmillan, 1880.

on Dante, carry with them more weight as regards religious poetry than *negative* objections amounting but to this—that it is not that form of poetry which has an interest for the objector. Many persons delight in the drama who dislike lyrical poetry; and others are admirable judges of painting who possess no taste for sculpture.

The religious poetry of Archbishop Trench may be referred to several different classes—such as the narrative, the allegoric, and the meditative. The last named finds perhaps its best expression in his sonnets, a form of composition which adds to the force of thoughtful poetry by the condensation that its structure requires, and imparts majesty by the unity which it insists on. Here is a specimen—

“What good soever in thy heart or mind
Doth yet no higher source nor fountain own
Than thine own self, nor bow to other throne,
Suspect and fear; although therein thou find
High purpose to go forth and bless thy kind,
Or in the awful temple of thy soul
To worship what is loveliest, and control
The ill within, and by strong laws to bind.
Good is of God—no good is therefore sure,
Which has dared wander from its source away:
Laws without sanction will not long endure,
Love will grow faint and fainter day by day,
And Beauty from the straight path will allure,
And weakening first, will afterwards betray.”

This “Good Counsel” is often needed most by the most soaring natures—natures high in aspirations, but ignorant how close to strength weakness often lurks. A poet tells us that

"By our own spirits we are deified."

The pride latent in some poetic natures might be termed the "artist pride," and meets a searching and profound warning in Tennyson's *Palace of Art*.

Here is another sonnet which, once thoughtfully read, leaves much behind—

"Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident,
It is the very place God meant for thee ;
And shouldst thou there small scope for action see,
Do not for this give way to discontent ;
Nor let the time thou owest to God be spent
In idly dreaming how thou mightest be,
In what concerns thy spiritual life, more free
From outward hindrance or impediment.
For presently this hindrance thou shalt find
That without which all goodness were a task
So slight that virtue never would grow strong :
And wouldst thou do one duty to His mind,
The Imposer's—overburdened thou shalt ask,
And own the need of grace to help, ere long."

Ours is an age of activities so thick crowding, and that often by necessity as well as choice, that even activities of a religious order shake a good deal of dust over the moral being, and leave so little time for contemplation that the relish for it dies, and the time left seems superfluous. It might profit by the following suggestion—

"A wretched thing it were, to have our heart
Like a thronged highway or a populous street
Where every idle thought has leave to meet,
Pause, or pass on as in an open mart ;
Or like some roadside pool, which no nice art
Has guarded that the cattle may not beat
And foul it with a multitude of feet,

"Till of the heavens it can give back no part.
 But keep thou thine a holy solitude,
 For He who would walk there would walk alone ;
 He who would drink there, must be first endued
 With single right to call that stream his own ;
 Keep thou thine heart, close-fastened, unrevealed,
 A fenced garden and a fountain sealed."

Among the schools of English theology in old days there was one sometimes called the "Platonic," which counted among its representatives such men as "silver-tongued Smith," Dr. Henry More, and Cudworth, one of the chief English exponents of ancient philosophy. They would have welcomed many of Archbishop Trench's poems, the following for example—

"To feel that we are homeless exiles here,
 To listen to the world's discordant tone,
 As to a private discord of our own,
 To know that we are fallen from a sphere
 Of higher being, pure, serene, and clear,
 Into the darkness of this dim estate—
 This thought may sometimes make us desolate,
 For this we may shed many a secret tear.
 But to mistake our dungeon for a throne,
 Our place of exile for our native land,
 To hear no discords in the universe,
 To find no matter over which to groan,
 This (oh ! that men would rightly understand !)
 This, seeming better, were indeed far worse."

Here is a sonnet which will remind many a wayfarer of one of man's least selfish regrets—

"To leave unseen so many a glorious sight,
 To leave so many lands unvisited,
 To leave so many worthiest books unread,
 Unrealised so many visions bright ;—
 Oh ! wretched yet inevitable spite

Of our brief span, that we must yield our breath,
 And wrap us in the unfeeling coil of death,
 So much remaining of unproved delight.
 But hush, my soul, and vain regrets, be stilled ;
 Find rest in Him who is the complement
 Of whatsoe'er transcends our mortal doom,
 Of baffled hope and unfulfilled intent :
 In the clear vision and aspect of whom
 All longings and all hopes shall be fulfilled."

The following has a significance equal to its pathos, although not expressed in its fifth and sixth lines with its author's usual clearness—

"TO SILVIO PELLICO.

"(On reading the story of his imprisonment.)"

"Songs of deliverance compassed thee about,
 Long ere thy prison doors were backward flung ;
 When first thy heart to gentle thoughts was strung,
 A song arose in heaven, an angel shout
 For one delivered from the hideous rout,
 Who with defiance and fierce mutual hate
 Do each the other's griefs exasperate.
 Thou, loving, from thy grief hadst taken out
 Its worst—for who is captive or a slave
 But he, who from that dungeon and foul grave,
 His own dark soul, refuses to come forth
 Into the light and liberty above ?
 Or whom may we call wretched on this earth
 Save only him who has left off to love ?"

It is unfortunate that the name of the poet addressed in the following sonnet is not prefixed to it. It is a noble assertion of the many functions assigned to the highest poetry—

"A counsellor well fitted to advise
 In daily life, and at whose lips no less
 Men may inquire, or nations, when distress
 Of sudden doubtful danger may arise,

Who, though his head be hidden in the skies,
 Plants his firm foot upon our common earth,
 Dealing with thoughts which everywhere have birth,—
 This is the poet, true of heart and wise :
 No dweller in a baseless world of dream,
 Which is not earth or heaven : his words have past
 Into man's common thought and week-day phrase ;
 This is the poet, and his verse will last.
 Such was our Shakespeare once, and such doth seem
 One who redeems our later gloomier days."

Next to religion, patriotism is perhaps the strongest
 inspirer of Archbishop Trench's poetry. Amid the
 fairest scenes of southern climes he asserts that

" We shall not need in quest of these to roam,
 While sunshine lies upon our English grass,
 And dewdrops glitter on green fields at home. "

While lamenting all that the traveller has to leave un-
 seen at Rome, he still is

" Glad in the hope to tread the soil again
 Of England, where our place of duty lies."

It is thus that he greets what he claims as the first
 sight of England—

" GIBRALTAR.

" England, we love thee better than we know—
 And this I learned, when after wanderings long
 'Mid people of another stock and tongue,
 I heard again thy martial music blow,
 And saw thy gallant children to and fro
 Pace, keeping ward at one of those huge gates,
 Twin giants watching the Herculean Straits.
 When first I came in sight of that brave show,
 It made my very heart within me dance,
 To think that thou thy proud foot should advance
 Forward so far into the mighty sea ;

Joy was it and exultation to behold
Thine ancient standard's rich emblazonry,
A glorious picture by the wind unrolled."

The poet vindicates thus his love for his country—a country in which he sees perpetually united those two sister islands that certain "light-hearted" politicians would separate, but on which as on a fixed centre rests an empire world-wide, with whose prosperity that of all civilised lands is identified—

"Peace, Freedom, Happiness, have loved to wait
On the fair islands, fenced by circling seas ;
And ever of such favoured spots as these
Have the wise dreamers dreamed, who would create
That perfect model of a happy state,
Which the world never saw. Oceana,
Utopia such, and Plato's isle that lay
Westward of Gades and the Great Sea's gate.
Dreams are they all, which yet have helped to make
That underneath fair polities we dwell,
Though marred in part by envy, faction, hate—
Dreams which are dear, dear England, for thy sake,
Who art indeed that sea-girt citadel,
And nearest image of that perfect state."

At all the later periods of his life the poems of this Irish poet continued to be marked by the same profound love for England, as, for instance, those written during the Russian War.

There are some persons who dislike, or are indifferent to, the expression of the patriotic sentiment in poetry, stigmatising it as "political poetry"—an objection which would have deprived us of Milton's greatest sonnets, and not a few of the chief lyrics in existence. Under the name of patriotic poetry no

doubt a good deal of stupid sedition has been written, but it has almost always proved to be bad as poetry, and not more noxious than an equal quantity of incendiary prose would have been. But the true love of country differs from the false as much as true religion differs from the follies that claim its name; and if it be excommunicated from the realm of poetry the same consequence follows as when religion has been thus excommunicated—that is to say, poetry itself is the chief sufferer. The religious and the patriotic sentiments are two of the bravest, the most disinterested, and the most self-sacrificing known to man. Both may lie doubtless at the heart of poetry when they do not rise to the surface, for the life-blood is not always shown either in the flushed cheek or in the wound; but the poetry which purposely excludes these sources of inspiration will be tempted to throw itself upon inferior ones—on frivolities, on epicurean enjoyments, or on sensational incidents hunted up out of odd corners, and not found on the broad highways of human life. A few remarks on the patriotic may fitly supplement those already made on the religious sentiment in its relations with poetry.

One of the most honourable characteristics of that great outburst of English poetry early in the nineteenth century is the manifest sincerity with which it gave utterance to love of country. It had, in a lesser degree, done so at its earlier outburst in the sixteenth century. Shakespeare's marvellous series of historic plays, from which Sir Robert Walpole con-

fessed that he had learned whatever he knew of England's ancient annals, suggest that the famous deathbed invective of John of Gaunt was but the expression of that patriotic passion which had ever burned in the poet's heart. Doubtless it was also in a large part the love of country which moved Spenser to seek in England's Arthur the hero of his *Fairy Queen*; but unhappily in that age a genuine patriotism — which must ever sympathise tenderly with the people, though not with the populace, while it is loyal to the sovereign—was half smothered in the idolatry felt, not by courtiers only, but by many literary aspirants, for Queen Elizabeth. The patriotism of a country that worships despotism, especially a novel despotism like that of the Tudors, is a patriotism founded largely on national vanity, as we learn from the "Grande Nation" of Louis the Fourteenth's time; and national vanity is not, like a true love of country, an inspirer of high poetry. The patriotic sentiment in England had made progress in proportion as a freedom grounded on law and in harmony with order had made progress; it had become matured during the vicissitudes of a long and perilous war, waged not to enslave feeblar nations, but to vindicate the freedom of all from the aggressions of Buonaparte, the child and embodiment of the French Revolution; and when the righteous cause had triumphed, a larger element of patriotism than English literature had ever known before manifested itself in that poetry which had accompanied the

struggle and gained animation from the victory. Scott found his best themes in the history of his country ; and it was not in the spirit of rancour, but of mutual respect, that the children of lands once foes fought again in his verse the fields of Bannockburn and Flodden. Burns had written a little earlier, and if his poems are still recited, alike amid the Highlands and the shrewder Lowlands, it is because the image of his country is to be found in them. As strong a patriotic sentiment broke out in Campbell's great naval odes, and in spite of his *Lochiel's Warning* it was one not restricted to the northern part of the island. Wordsworth, in his *Sonnets dedicated to Liberty*, cheered England on through the vicissitudes of a struggle such as she had never known in the days of her Henries and Edwards. Coleridge's *Fears in Solitude* exquisitely expressed, when invasion was expected, a poet's solicitude for those sufferings which fall on the helpless and the aged, when their prayer is "that their flight be not in the winter ;" while in his *Ode to the Departing Year*, amid passages of admiring and dutiful love, he mingled as fearless denunciations of his country's sins, especially in connection with the slave trade—

" But chief by Afric's wrongs,
Strange, horrible, and foul."

In two of Southey's lyrical poems his genius rose, under the stimulus of patriotic emotion, to a height never by him reached elsewhere. One of these is

his *Ode written during the Negotiations with Buona-parte in January 1814*—

“Who counsels peace at this momentous hour.”

The other is his *Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte*. In the latter, the poet follows the funeral procession while it advances along St. George's Chapel; and the old tombs, as he passes them, bleed again with sad memories of the chief passages in English history from the Wars of the Roses to the war with Napoleon. Among the greater poets of modern times Byron and Goethe seem to have been those the least marked by strong love of country, perhaps because among those most self-engrossed. Several of Browning's poems are vigorous illustrations of English history. Keats had love to spare besides that which spent itself on Greek mythology; among his aspirations here is one:

“In the long vista of the years to come,
Let me not see my country's glory fade.”

Tennyson, while the most ideal and imaginative of our living poets, has also in numberless ways proved himself pre-eminently a national one. He has written a great cycle of “Idyls” on England's mythic king; and many more illustrating with matchless skill the modern life of England not only among the poor, but also in that higher class, which, from the degree in which it is coloured by conventionalities, admits least easily of poetic delineation. He has recorded countless incidents of English life, legendary or historical,

from Cophetua and Godiva to *The Revenge* and *The Defence of Lucknow*. He has added three to the roll of English historical plays. He has vividly illustrated many of those modes of thought, feeling, and action which characterise modern England, and not a few of her social conditions, alike in their good and in their evil. He has sung the cottage, the manor-house, the throne

“ Broad-based upon her people’s will,
And compassed by the inviolate sea.”

He has flattered no class prejudices, aristocratic or democratic; and he has asserted the true principles of national greatness and stability in those two majestic poems, “ You ask me why, though ill at ease,” and “ Of old sat Freedom on the heights,” on reading which a statesman,¹ who was ardently attached to letters and widely acquainted with them, exclaimed, “ They are as stately as those two temples which stand side by side on that plain near Pæstum ! ”

In ancient times no less the true poets loved their country.

“ The blind old man of Scio’s rocky isle,”

when the villagers gathered round him as he chaunted his rhapsodies on the seashore, embraced the whole race of Greece, whether on her mainland, her islands, or her colonial dependencies, in a common affection. We cannot doubt that in his imagination he saw the eyes of the listeners flash as they heard the deeds of

¹ The late Lord Monteagle.

their fathers recited, and that he received from their rapturous sympathy no small portion of his inspiration. Virgil sang the Trojan hero to whom Rome owed her existence. Horace, though his themes were sometimes below him, yet in the most impassioned and pathetic of his odes¹ gave expression to the despair with which in his youth he had bewailed the defeat of Pompey at Pharsalia, and the destruction of the Roman republic; and in his later life he dedicated his most important lyrics to the enforcement of those solid ethical principles through which alone the empire could become great; while he fearlessly rebuked his fellow-countrymen for their luxury, their factiousness, and their neglect of the household ties. The great poets of Italy and Spain, like Schiller and other poets in modern Germany, were each of them devoted to his native land—her greatness in the past, and her freedom and peace in the present.

In this fellowship of patriotism and poetry there is nothing extraordinary. Patriotism, while a moral, is also largely an imaginative passion. If it is to bring forth worthy fruit it must become more than this, wedding itself with reason and walking in the ways of duty; but without imagination a man can hardly even take in the idea of country and of nation. He has no difficulty in appreciating the claims of a clan, which is but a family expanded, or of sympathising with a class whose wellbeing is identified with his own; but the idea of a nation is a vaster thing than these, and

¹ Epode xvi., *Altera jam teritur.*

he who grasps it has to blend in a single conception countless thoughts and associations that come to him from remote tracts and distant periods. A nation is a unity which includes a vast plurality, many members with diverse functions, and yet a common life and common interest. It comprises whole races which in early days strove against each other on many a battle-field, yet whose remoter descendants were destined, through geographical or other necessities, to become amalgamated. Looking back on history the thoughtful patriot discerns not merely its accidental confusions, but under them a latent meaning and a providential purpose. Petty resentments then give place to a sounder love of country, and the lesson of history is peace. How otherwise could a common country exist for the children of Provence and of Brittany, or for those of Austria and Hungary? The true patriot remembers the past and its wrongs, where wrongs have existed, but only to teach the lesson they bequeath and pay a tribute to the suffering heroism of ancient days, not to forge bolts of vengeance, when there is no longer a head upon which they can justly fall. True patriotic love is not a vindictive passion—it is a magnanimous one; it is not a vainglorious assumption that a single nation has absorbed all the virtues, and that all other nations consist of “barbarians” as the Greeks, or of “hostes” as the Romans, called them. It is not an aggressive impulse; on the contrary, the aspiration of the patriot is that his country should be justly looked up to as the

founder and sustainer of virtuous civilisation in all lands. Patriotism is not a blind affection; it sees clearly the faults of the country loved, and cares little for its praise and much for the fulfilment of its highest vocation. It is not self-love dilated, but the extinction of self-love in an affection the largest known to man except that inspired by religion. The love of country blends the loyal devotedness of filial love with the discrimination, often painful, of love parental; and yet that love, far from obliterating, quickens in him who feels it the love which he owes to his neighbour, and the reverence due to total humanity. There is a mystery in all affections which rise above vulgar instincts; it is thus with the love of country—a love unintelligible to many who claim its exclusive possession. The patriot sees in her more than others see; he sees what she may become: and yet he remembers that there remains in her much that cannot meet his eye; for it is part of the greatness of a nation that, though her fields and cities are visible things, her highest greatness and most sacred claims lie beyond these, and belong in part, like whatever includes a spiritual element, to the sphere of “things not seen.” Towards such an insight, as regards nation and country, the imagination, like man’s other faculties, contributes its part, thus elevating patriotism, which sinks otherwise, like other blind affections, to the low level of unreasonable and illicit passions, and passes thence on to extinction. It is therefore not surprising that the old Greek who knew everything should have

noted in the "Poet of a Nation" the patriot as well as the seer, and in both capacities "a counsellor well fitted to advise." If that Greek had lived later, and become a believer, he would have remained a patriot, and been a more ardent one. He would have said, "A nation comes next in dignity to the Christian Church. It was in some sort a type of her."

To return to Archbishop Trench. His secular poems are drawn from very various sources.

At the close of the second volume we find a series entitled "Elegiac Poems," replete with a deep pathos; and elsewhere are numerous pieces based on the human affections and social ties. Some of the best are a combination of natural description and of reflection. . . . As happy specimens of this class we may name "An Evening in France,"¹ and "The Descent of the Rhone."² Other poems combine occurrences with meditations, as, for instance, "An Incident Versified,"³ and "On an Early Death."⁴ Some embody old legends of many countries, such as "A Legend of Alhambra,"⁵ "Sais,"⁶ "Sabbation," a Jewish legend,⁷ "The Oil of Mercy,"⁸ "The Tree of Life,"⁹ "Timoleon,"¹⁰ "Alexander at the Gates of Paradise, a Legend from the Talmud,"¹¹ "The Breaker of Idols."¹² We have tales from the Persian,

¹ Vol. i. p. 51.

² Vol. i. p. 54.

³ Vol. i. p. 86.

⁴ Vol. i. p. 143.

⁵ Vol. i. p. 78.

⁶ Vol. i. p. 132.

⁷ Vol. i. p. 147.

⁸ Vol. ii. p. 17.

⁹ Vol. ii. p. 21.

¹⁰ Vol. ii. p. 65.

¹¹ Vol. ii. p. 73.

¹² Vol. ii. p. 87.

and ballads of Haroun Al Raschid, and many besides, including "Genoveva" and "The Steadfast Prince." Here is a specimen of a style different from that in which he commonly wrote. It is extracted from a poem entitled an "Ode to Sleep"—

"I cannot follow thy departing track,
Nor tell in what far meadows, gentle Sleep,
Thou art delaying. I would win thee back,
Were mine some drowsy potion, or dull spell,
Or charmed girdle, mighty to compel
Thy heavy grace; for I have heard it said,
Thou art no flatterer, that dost only keep
In kingly haunts, leaving unvisited
The poor man's lowlier shed;
And when the day is joyless, and its task
Unprofitable, I were fain to ask,
Why thou wilt give it such an ample space,
Why thou wilt leave us such a weary scope
For memory, and for that which men call hope,
Nor wind in one embrace
Sad eve and night forlorn
And undelightful morn.

And therefore am I seeking to entwine
A coronal of poppies for my head,
Or wreath it with a wreath engarlanded
By Lethe's slumberous waters. Oh! that mine
Were some dim chamber turning to the north,
With latticed casement bedded deep in leaves,
That opening with sweet murmur might look forth
On quiet fields from broad o'erhanging eaves;
And ever when the Spring her garland weaves,
Were darkened with encroaching ivy-trail
And jagged vine-leaves' shade;
And all its pavement starred with blossoms pale
Of jasmine, when the wind's least stir was made;
Where the sunbeam was verdurous-cool, before
It wound into that quiet nook, to paint
With interspace of light and colour faint
That tessellated floor."

This is a youthful poem, and, with a few others like it, shows how easily the author might have succeeded in a style more popular if the "*Musæ Severiores*" had not drawn him by preference to the poetry of graver thoughts. Later he was by necessity much drawn away from poetry by his official duties, and also by the composition of his numerous prose works, as Southey was drawn away from poetry by his historical works, and Coleridge by metaphysics, before either had more than indicated what he might otherwise have accomplished in it. Mere drudgery is a less formidable competitor with poetry than higher things ; a clerkship in a bank is unseductive to genius ; but theology, history, and philosophy have sufficient kinship with poetry to provide another investment for the faculty and another satisfaction for the craving.

III

POEMS BY SIR SAMUEL FERGUSON¹

I

SIR SAMUEL FERGUSON'S poetry has a very special character of its own. It does not profess, like a host of recent poems, to be a revealer of mysteries, metaphysical or psychological; and it has as little affinity with those works which reproduce the old tales of the Greek mythology,—a vintage rich indeed, but the grape-skins of which have perhaps been sucked too often since they were cast aside, their best wine duly stored by the gatherers of an earlier day. The mediæval legends have contributed nothing to the materials of this book; and it seldom aims at the illustration of modern life, the hardest crux of modern poetry. It is drawn from sources less known among us, more than two-thirds of it being founded on the earliest remains of Irish romance. Sir Samuel Ferguson has already given us two remarkable volumes,

¹ *Poems*. By Sir Samuel Ferguson. London: George Bell and Sons. Dublin: William M'Gee.

in which analogous themes are treated, viz. *Congal*, a tale of Ireland's "Heroic Age," and *Lays of the Western Gael*, in which last events taken from historical as well as legendary periods are recorded. Nearly all the Irish poems in this volume belong to Ireland's Pagan time.

Unfortunately, but few of the Irish manuscripts illustrating that time have as yet been translated, whether in the form of verse or in that of prose,—the latter the better, because the truer, form, except when, as in this instance, the verse is at once thoroughly free and thoroughly faithful to the *spirit* of the original. These poems are, however, not translations ; but, in passing through the imagination of a modern Irish poet, the ancient song seems to have lost nothing of that native note which combines the barbaric with the sweet. The legendary poems are entitled, "Mesgedra," "Fergus Wry-Mouth," "The Naming of Cuchullin," "Conary," "Deirdre," and "The Twins of Macha." Among the most representative are "Conary" and "The Naming of Cuchullin," the former being essentially epic in character, while the latter resembles a fragment from a lyrical drama. The story of King Conary Mor affords, as the preface informs us, "a curious insight into the beliefs of the early Irish. We read of God, and of Gods, but not of altars or sacrifices, and of certain sacred injunctions *Gesa* (*Gaysa*), the violation of which was attended with temporal punishment. The agents inflicting such retribution appear in the form of fairies—men, that is, of the *Sidhs*,

or fairy-hills, those mounts in which the wizards and the sorcerers of the Tuatha de Danaan (a conquered race, which had held possession of Ireland before the landing of the Milesians) were thought to enjoy an underground existence, and to preserve the arts of music and metallurgy." These fairy-men, for to such they had turned after their subjugation, never forgot their ancient wrong, and took every opportunity of avenging their race on the victorious Milesians. They hid within the central hollows of the mountains, the iron ore of which they welded, century after century, into the arms wherewith they expected one day to cut down their enemies, and recover their old dominion; and the sound of their hammers and their anvils was heard far off, on still nights. The reign of Conary, Erin's Arch-King, had been an uninterrupted period of plenty and prosperity, but calamity comes at last. Conary has banished his three foster-brothers, Ferger, Fergel, and Fergobar, for crimes that deserved death. They league themselves with a mighty British pirate, Ingcel, making with him a pact that all the spoil taken on the coast of Britain and Scotland, then named Alba, should belong to the Irish exiles; the Irish spoil, on the other hand, falling to Ingcel. Their two brothers, Ferragon and Lomna Druth, men as kindly as the other three are savage, follow them in their exile, and accept their league with the pirate. The British coasts are first assailed, and a huge spoil enriches the exiles; while Ingcel's father and his seven brothers, accidentally sojourning with the

victims, perish with them. Ingcel bides his day. "To Ireland!" he exclaims; "the Irish prey is mine!"

In the meantime Conary, accompanied by a splendid suite, rides home from Thomond, where he had been composing the strifes of the lesser kings; but by a series of mischances he finds himself unwittingly, but in rapid succession, violating those ceremonial *Gaysha*, or divine rules, every the slightest neglect of which is sure to provoke retribution. He resolves to pass the night at a large guest-house, or caravanserai, called Da-Derga. On his way thither—

"Conary was aware
Of three that rode before them on the way.
Red were their coursers and their mantles red,
Red, too, their caps, blood-red."

Another *gaysh* has been transgressed, for it is unlawful for a king—

"To follow three red riders on the way."

The King's son, Ferflath, a mere child who is beautifully described, gallops forward to stop them. Swift as the wind the red riders evade pursuit, and reach Da-Derga before the King. They are of the fairy-race, and they have assumed the garb of men but to work the vengeance of the Tuatha. It is they, not the strength of warriors, that is destined to work the vengeance of the vanquished race.

The terrible Ingcel has reached the Irish coast—

"While thus fared Conary, the pirates' scouts
Who watched the coast, put off to where the fleet,

Stay'd on the heaving ridges of the main,
 Lay off Ben Edar. Ingcel's galley reached,
 High on the prow they found him looking forth,
 As from a crag o'er-hanging grassy lands
 Where home-bred cattle graze, the lion glares
 A-hungered ; and, behind, as meaner beasts
 That wait the lion's onset for their share,
 Outlaw'd and reprobate of many a land,
 The ravening crew."

The spies make report of the cavalcade which they
 have seen advancing, and of the stately mansion which
 has received them ; while Ferragon inly murmurs—

"O royal brother, that it be not thou !"

The pirates land—

"But, from Da-Derga's hall so streamed the light,
 It shone at distance as a ruddy star ;
 And thitherward the host o'er moor and fell
 Marched straight ; but when behind a sheltering knoll
 Hard by, but still concealed, the ranks were drawn,
 'Make now our Carn,' said Ingcel, and the host
 Defiling past him, cast, each man, his stone
 All in one heap.

'When this night's work is done,'
 Said Ingcel, 'he who shall return alive
 Shall take his stone again. Who not returns,
 His stone shall here remain his monument.'"

A spy returning from the gates makes report of what
 he has seen within, and his statements present a
 series of graphic pictures. He describes the "three
 slender, three face-shaven men," in red, who delight
 the rough concourse with their pipes. Ferragon at
 once recognises the "Fairy-men"—

"Men of the *Sidhs* they are : to strike at them
 Is striking at a shadow.

At the first tuning of these elvish pipes
 Nor crow nor cormorant round all the coasts
 But hastens to partake the flesh of men."

The next is a warrior—

" He who sits
 The midmost of the three, grasps with both hands
 A spear of fifty rivets, and so sways
 And swings the weapon as a man might think
 The very thing had life, and struggled strong
 To dash itself at breasts of enemies :
 A cauldron at his feet, big as the vat
 Of a king's kitchen ; in that vat a pool,
 Hideous to look upon, of liquor black :
 Therein he dips and cools the blade by times.

Sudden sallies hard to be restrained
 Affect it, oft as blood of enemies
 Is ripe for spilling."

King Conary is next described—

" Grey he was,
 Of aspect mild, benevolent, composed.
 A cloak he wore of colour like the haze
 Of a May morning when the sun shines warm
 On dewy meads and fresh-ploughed tillage land,
 Various beautiful, with border broad
 Of golden woof that glittered to his knee,
 A stream of light."

As each warrior is described, old friendships reawaken in the breast of the two gentler foster-brothers, and Ferragon implores Ingcel to desist from the attack. The pirate, however, insists on the compact. It is gladly acknowledged by the three wicked foster-brothers ; while the other brothers scorn to deny the league, but will not fulfil it. They strike their daggers through their hearts, and fall dead at the pirate's feet.

Then the onset is made. At first Conary and those around him despise it ; but they soon learn from the doorkeepers that the stream from the distant hill has been cut off, and that the pirates are advancing to fire the walls. Ferflath has a prescience of the doom :—
 “I fear them, these red pipers,” said the boy ; but the King, who has just sent forth a warrior (Cormac) with a band to disperse the assailants, commands the red-capped pipers to sound the charge. They obey—

“ At once
 It seemed as earth and sky were sound alone,
 And every sound a maddening battle-call,
 So spread desire of fight through breast and brain,
 And every arm to feat of combat strung.
 Forth went the sallying hosts : the hosts within
 Heard the enlarging tumult from their doors
 Roll outward ; and the clash and clamour heard
 Of falling foes before ; and, over it,
 The yelling pibroch ; but, anon, the din
 Grew distant, and more distant ; and they heard
 Instead, at every door new onset loud,
 And cry of ‘ Fire ! ’ ‘ Bring fire ! ’ ”

The magic music has beguiled the victorious warriors far into the forest, and holds them there bound by a charm.

King Conary sends forth a yet greater warrior, Duftach, with a band, to chase away the ignoble foe. It is as before—

“ The hosts within
 Heard the commotion and the hurtling rout
 Half round the house, and heard the mingling scream
 Of pipes and death-cries far into the night ;
 But distant and more distant grew the din,
 And Duftach came not back.”

The flames ascend, and the greatest of King Conary's warriors, Conall Carnach, demands permission to sally forth. It is accorded. His cry of victory is soon heard; but it, too, recedes into the far distance, and he returns no more. The fairy music has conquered.

The King is left with few save his personal attendants and a Druid, who warns him that the Gods have delivered him over to the power of lying Spirits, because he has violated their sacred *Gayshe*. Conary issues forth himself to the fight, accompanied by his brave sons, and his faithful "battle-sidesman," the giant Cecht. Three times they circle the mansion, driving the pirates away from it for a time. But the King is expiring from thirst, and all the water supplies of Da-Derga have been spent in endeavours to check the flames. The "battle-sidesman" remembers a brook not far off, and cuts his way to it through the foe, while the King's child, placed on his shoulders, holds fast a golden cup. The assailants return, but the "battle-sidesman" again dashes through them, and the child never loses his hold of the cup. They are near Da-Derga—

"When, in the faint light of the growing dawn,
Casting his eyes to seaward, lo! the fleet
Of Ingcel had set sail; and, gazing next
Up the dim slope before him, on the ridge
Between him and Da-Derga's mansion, saw
Rise into view a chariot-cavalcade,
And Conall Carnach in the foremost car.
Behind him Cormac, son of Conor, came,
And Duftach bearing now a drooping spear,
At head of all their sallying armament.

Wild, pale, and shame-faced were the looks of all,
 As men who doubted did they dream or wake,
 Or were they honest, to be judged, or base."

They enter, but to find their deserted King smothered
 under heaps of the slain—

" 'Thou, Ferflath, take the cup,
 And hold it to thy father's lips,' said Cecht.
 The child approached the cup; the dying king
 Felt the soft touch and smiled, and drew a sigh,
 And, as they raised him in the chariot, died."

The poem closes with the lament of Erin's great
 warrior, Conall Carnach, and a prophecy of the good
 tidings which St. Patrick is destined to bring one day
 to Erin.

" I appeal to you
 Beings of goodness perfect, and to Thee,
 Great unknown Being who hast made them all,
 Take ye compassion on the race of men;
 And, for this slavery of *gaysh* and *sidh*
 Send down some emanation of yourselves
 To rule and comfort us! And I have heard
 There come the tidings yet may make us glad
 Of such a one new born, or soon to be.
 Now, mount beside me, that with solemn rites
 We give the king, at Tara, burial."

It would be difficult to find, amid our recent literature, a poem which at once aims as high as "Conary," and as adequately fulfils its aim. Perhaps its greatest merit, its originality, may discourage rather than attract those indolent readers who shrink from all themes except such as they are used to,—men of that species of intelligence which is well pleased to have its own coals stirred up to brighter flame, but sends out a jet

of smoke in the face of one who throws fresh aliment on the fire. More apprehensive readers can, however, hardly fail to be struck by the degree in which they meet, within a narrow compass, so many of the higher qualities of poetry. Next to this poem the most important is perhaps "The Naming of Cuchullin."

Cuchullin was the greatest of Erin's legendary heroes,—the Achilles of her song. He defended her borders in single fight against the warriors of alien clans, stood up fearlessly against tyrannous kings, and was ever the champion of the right and the protector of the poor. His original name was Setanta; and Sir Samuel Ferguson's poem records the occasion on which it was changed. King Conor pays a visit to the far-famed smith and armourer, Cullan, accompanied by his bard, and others of his Court. Setanta, then a child, refuses to leave the sports of his companion youths, but promises to follow the King by himself at a later hour. The guests sit down to a banquet, while the armourer entertains them with praises of his terrible wolf-hound, who tears to pieces, not only men, but companies of men, if they approach his master's house unbidden. Suddenly the cry of the hound is heard, and the King trembles for the fate of the child. Setanta enters, rebukes the armourer for not keeping his mastiff chained up, and remarks that when assailed, he had to fling him three times against the stone gates before he could kill him. The armourer raises a bitter wail, and declares that his hound was not only

the protector of his property, but the most faithful of his friends. The child at once replies that he will take the place of the hound he has slain, and be henceforth the armourer's friend and *hound*. Amaze-ment falls on the company, and Setanta's name is at once solemnly changed to "Cuchullin," which means "the Wolf-hound of Cullan." The mood of inspira-tion descends upon Cathbad, the Druid, and he bursts forth in prophetic song—

"To my ears
There comes a clamour from the rising years,
The tumult of a torrent passion-swollen,
Rolled hitherward ; and, mid its mingling noises,
I hear perpetual voices
Proclaim to laud and fame
The name
CUCHULLIN !

Hound of the Smith, thy boyish vow
Devotes thy manhood, even now,
To vigilance, fidelity, and toil :
'Tis not alone the wolf, fang-bare to snatch,
Not the marauder from the lifted latch
Alone, thy coming footfall makes recoil.
The nobler service thine to chase afar
Seditious tumult and intestine war,
Envy, and unfraternal hate,
From all the households of the State :
To hunt, untiring, down
The vices of the lewd-luxurious town,
And all the brood
Of Wrong and Rapine, ruthlessly pursued,
Forth of the kingdom's bounds exterminate.

.
Come forth ! I hear
His footsteps drawing near,
Who smites the proud ones, who the poor delivers :
I hear his wheels hurl through the dashing rivers :

They fill the narrowing glen ;
 They shake the quaking causeways of the fen ;
 They roll upon the moor ;
 I hear them at the door :—
 Lauds to the helpful Gods, the Hero-Givers,
 Here stands he, man of men !

Great are the words he speaks ;
 They move through hearts of kindreds and of nations.
 At each clear sentence, the unseemly pallor
 Of fear's precipitate imaginations
 Avoids the bearded cheeks,
 And to their wonted stations
 On every face
 Return the generous, manly-mantling colour
 And reassuring grace
 Of fixed obedience, discipline, and patience,
 Heroic courage, and protecting valour."

II.—"CONGAL"¹

Congal is the longest of Sir Samuel Ferguson's poems, and one which embraces the widest range of interest. The Preface informs us that, although not a translation, its leading incidents are derived in a large measure from the Irish Bardic poem, *Cath Muighe Rath*, or "The Battle of Moyra." It is a work characterised by "that largeness of purpose, unity, and continuity of action which are among the principal elements of Epic Poetry." The Battle of Moyra (the present Moira) took place A.D. 637, and, in Sir Samuel Ferguson's judgment, was "the expiring effort of the Pagan and Bardic party in Ireland against the newly consolidated power of Church and Crown."

¹ Dublin : Edward Ponsonby. London : Bell and Daldy.

The metre of the poem eminently suits the wild and warlike theme. It is that of Chapman's Homer, described by Keats, who tells us that he had known nothing of Homer "Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold."

Congal is the King of Ulster; but he has been deprived of a large territory by a usurping prince, and through the "false arbitrament of Domnal, Arch-King of all Ireland. Domnal is, notwithstanding, entitled to Congal's reverence as his foster-father, and Congal journeys to his palace, where a truce, lately concluded between the rival princes, is to be confirmed by a royal banquet. He bids adieu to his promised bride, Lafinda, promising to return in a few days, when their marriage is to take place.

Congal is himself neither Christian nor Pagan, but stands in doubt between the Bards and Priests, who represent the two hostile Religions. As he approaches the mountains of Mourne, he is met by Ardan, the Arch-Bard of all Ireland, sent to him by Kellach the Halt, a gray-haired prince, fiercer in age than in youth, a Pagan, and the great protector of the bards and Druids. Kellach is the uncle of Congal, and has sent him a pressing invitation to rest a night beneath his roof. Congal consents; and as they ride side by side the Arch-Bard makes boast of the greatness of his Order and its chief patron—

"Yes, though the Clerics' grasp on all our fruitful lands are
set,
The poet-people desert teems with inspiration yet."

Here is a picture of the strife which then divided Erin—

“Raise thine eyes to yonder mountain head
That 'twixt us and the eastern sky uplifts its glittering cone :
There where thou seest the cairn at top, dwelt in his cave of
stone
Their hermit, Domangart, ten years : the tempests from the
sea
On one side dashed him, and on one the west wind blanched
him : he
Daily, or from his driving cloud or mountain altar bare
Loosed 'gainst the nation's ancient Gods his searching shafts
of prayer ;
And, daily from the rocky crest of Bingian here, hard by,
Above like him, and raised like him, midway 'twixt earth
and sky,
The red Bard Trial, in reply, launched from his rival chair
Athwart the empty fields of space, the deadlier poets *Aeir*,
Till, when the struggle had endured the tenth year, in his
pride
Of prayer and fasting Domangart sank 'neath the *Aeir* and
died.”

On reaching the Kellach's fort Congal meets at the gate the old halt-king, seated in a brazen chair. He is magnificently entertained. At the banquet no priest blesses the meat, but countless bards sing the glories of Erin before priests had trod her shores, when the harvests were ever plenteous, and maladies were unknown. Many a scoff is uttered against the Arch-King Domnal, who favours the new order of things. Congal listens, half incensed, and half in sympathy with the scoffers. Here is a Homeric simile—

“Look how the culprit stands confused before the judge while one

Who, passing through the woods unseen, has seen the foul
deed done,
Relates the manner of the fact ; tells how with treacherous
blow
Struck from behind, the murdered man sank on the path-
way ; so
With flushing cheek, contracted brow, and restless, angry
eye,
Sat Congal till the day was closed."

The next day Congal reaches the palace of the Arch-King beside the Boyne. Domnal has bidden all the Provincial Kings and the greater chiefs of Erin to his banquet. He places Congal at his left-hand side, under the pretext that his foster-son will thus sit "next his heart." Congal assents, though ill pleased ; for the seat of the Ulster King is at the right hand of Erin's Arch-King, both by tradition and Brehon Law. A less equivocal wrong follows. Congal's rival, who has already filched from him a large portion of his royal inheritance, enters the hall, and takes the place of honour at Domnal's right hand. The third insult is unpardonable. When the "Egg of Appetite," which initiates the banquets of Erin, is carried round, the other Provincial Kings are served on silver dishes, but Congal on one of wood. He rises in wrath, spurns the table with his foot, flings his robe at his feet, and departs with his suite to Ulster. It is in vain that Domnal later sends a bishop, and afterwards an embassy of bards, to appease the outraged guest. Congal reaches the fort where his affianced bride dwells with her brother, M'Sweeny. The scene is an Idyll of Erin's ancient day.

"The Princess with her woman train without the fort he found

Beside a limpid running stream, upon the primrose ground,
In two ranks seated opposite, with soft alternate stroke
Of bare, white, counter-striking feet, fulling a splendid cloak,
Fresh from the loom : incessant rolled athwart the fluted
board

The thick web fretted, while two maids with arms uplifted
poured

Pure water on it diligently ; and to their moving feet
In answering verse they sang a chaunt of cadence clear and
sweet.

Princess Lafinda stood beside ; her feet in dainty shoes
Laced softly, and her graceful limbs in robes of radiant hues
Clad delicately, keeping the time."

Congal informs her curtly that the war has broken out anew, and that he must repair at once to Alba (Scotland) and summon his allies. The Princess pleads in vain for peace, pathetically lamenting the numberless widows and orphans thus sentenced to misery by the pride of princes. Congal departs unmoved, but boasting that he will return triumphant and then solemnise his nuptials.

He sails to Alba, to "Saxon Land," and to "Frank-Land," and returns to Ulster with allies from each. Immediately after his landing a storm bursts forth, and his ships are destroyed by the lightning ; but old Kellach, whose brazen chair advances ever with the host, sustained on the shoulders of his clansmen, pronounces the omen to be good. The warriors stand in doubt. All night omens perplex them : sounds of giant footsteps are re-echoed among the cloud-veiled hills ; and at early morning Congal views the Phantom Manannan, seen by none who does not

die within the year. While crossing a ford they encounter a haggard spectre, that never ceases to wash her hands in the current which at their touch leaps up all blood. Congal alone dares to address her. In reply she lifts up by the locks what seems a dead man's head, and he recognises it as his own. But Kellach the Halt scoffs at the vision, and the hosts continue their march. Ere long a war-chariot emerges from the woods. Lafinda and her nurse sit in it. Lafinda addresses her affianced husband. St. Brigid, in one of whose convents she learned the Christian Faith as a child, had appeared to her the preceding night, and commanded her to warn Congal that if he advances to Moyra he and his host shall perish. Congal refuses to obey, old Kellach spurns the demand, and Lafinda announces to Congal her determination to become one of St. Brigid's daughters. Her warning, however, has not been thrown away upon Congal's allies, some of whom are Christians; and a fierce debate arises among them as to their future course. Congal announces his fixed resolution to restore the Bards to their ancient possessions, and drive the Priests out of Erin. It is the crisis. The Arch-Bard Ardan addresses the host, and all controversy ceases.

“As when the tree-tops of a wood first feel a blast of wind,
One rustling oak begins to stir, then stirs the oak behind,
Thence on in gradual-deepening grooves, and on in widening
rings
The tree-commingling tumult moves till all the forest swings,
So battle impulse through them went.”

Their advance is thus grandly described—

“As a great black barque compact of many a tree,
That on her launch from some high beach, shoots down at
once to sea ;
Or like as when, in time of thaw, a snow-drift, deep and
wide,
By strong winds in a hollow place lodged on a mountain
side,
Fetches away with loosening crash ; or like as when a cloud
Lumbering the sky, strong winds arise, and all the aerial
crowd
Fall on at once ; it bulges, bursts, rolls out, and overspreads
The face of heaven with ominous gloom above amazed men’s
heads ;
So ominously, so all at once, with clash and muttering jar,
Swift, dark, on Moyra’s fated field rolled down the cloud of
war.”

In the meantime the Arch-King Domnal has assembled all the Provincial Kings and clans that acknowledge him as their Suzerain, and marshals them on the plain of Moyra. Opposed to them stand Congal’s foreign allies. Domnal addresses each of his subject hosts in turn, and then begins the memorable battle of Moyra. It consists largely of single combats, but these are often veiled in the onset of masses rushing to their doom. Halt Kellach watches the vicissitudes of the battle from his chair on an eminence, and sends successively son after son into the conflict that rages below.

“But as a pack of curled waves clamouring on
Divide and ride to either side, resurging round a stone
That marks the tide-mark ; or as storms rebounding from the
breast
Of some impassive mountain huge, go raving forth in quest
Of things prehensible, broad oaks, or wide-eaved homes of
men,

To wreak their wrath on ; bellowing forth from every hollow
 glen
 That girds the mighty mountain foot, they on the open vale
 Issue tremendous: groan the woods: the trembling mothers
 pale
 Beneath their straining rafters crouch, or, driven from hut
 and hall,
 Hie to the covert of some rock, or rock-built castle wall :
 So Brasil's battle, burst in twain against the steadfast face
 Of Kinel-Conail, still pursued, oblique, its headlong race
 Past the impenetrable ranks ; and, swift as winter wind,
 Fell thundering down the lanes of death."

Here is a description of a wrestling match—and no
 less of a wave,—such waves as break on the western
 coasts of Ireland—

“ And one great heave he gave
 Of his whole heroic body, as the sea upheaves a wave,
 A long strong-rising wave of brine, that from the wallowing
 floor
 Of ocean, when a storm has ceased, nigh to some beachy
 shore,
 Shows with a sudden black-piled bulk, and swallowing in its
 sweep
 Accumulated water-heaps from all the hollowed deep,
 Soars, foams, o'erhangs its glassy gulfs ; then, stooping with
 a roar
 Immeasurable of sea-cascades, stuns all the sounding shore :
 With such a heave great Conal rose, rushed onward, over-
 hung
 His down-bent foe, and to the earth the King of Ulster
 flung."

Hour after hour the combatants

“ Thus wove the dazzling woof of death 'twixt gleaming brand
 and brand : ”

but the end comes at last. It comes through one of
 those humorous accidents on which the Irish bards,
 in a bitter irony, often made the gravest crisis of a

heroic narrative turn. In the house of a neighbouring chief there has long dwelt an orphan and idiot youth, who being fit for no better service, is, though of an ancient stock, employed in menial service. His mistress sneers at him for showing himself only capable of putting out the kitchen fire with wet fagots when brave men are fighting close by. The Idiot snatches up a bill-hook, and rushes to the battlefield. He meets Congal, beneath whose hand warrior after warrior has fallen, and challenges him to combat. Congal is unwilling to hurt one so helpless, and passes him in scorn. The Idiot flings the bill-hook at him, and the wound it inflicts is mortal. Congal dashes once more into the battle, and all whom he meets fall before him. Exhausted at last by the loss of blood he sinks to the ground. The Phantom Manannan, by some regarded as the Wind God of the old Gaelic worship, visits his victim a second time.

“Sudden and black the storm swept down, with scourge of
hissing hail
It lashed the blinded, stumbling hosts : a shrill loud-whistling
wail
And thunderous clamours filled the sky, it seemed, with such
a sound
As though to giant herdsman’s call there barked a giant
hound
Within the cloud above their heads ; and loud-rebounding
strokes
They also heard, or seemed to hear, and claps of flapping
cloaks
Within the bosom of the cloud : so deemed they : but anon
The storm rolled northward.”

The King has vanished with the storm.

When Congal awakens from his trance, his native mountains of Antrim loom around him, and the Arch-Bard Ardan stands at his side.

“As when a tempest—which, all day, with whirlwind, fire,
and hail,
Vexing mid air, has hid the sight of sunshine from the vale,
T’ward sunset rolls its thunders up; fast as it mounts on
high,
A flood of placid light refills the lately troubled sky;
Shine all the full down-sliding streams, wet blades and
quivering sprays,
And all the grassy-sided vales with emerald lustre blaze;
So, in the shower of Congal’s tears his storms of passion
passed;
So o’er his long distempered soul came tranquil light at last.”

A veiled maiden moves from the wicket of St. Brigid’s convent hard by. It is his promised bride, whom the dying king addresses—

“Bride now of Christ, she answered low; I know thee but as
one
For whom my heavenly spouse has died.”

Ere long a marvellous vision passes before the eyes of Congal, a vision, not of the “Man of Sorrows,” but of Him for Whom the heavens and the earth are a vesture.

“ ‘His feet were set in fields of waving grain;
His head above obscured the sun.’ . . .
No longer soiled with stain of earth, what seemed his
mantle shone
Rich with innumerable hues refulgent, such as one
Beholds, and thankful-hearted he, who casts abroad his gaze
O’er some rich tillage country-side when mellow Autumn
days
Gild all the sheafy foodful stooks; and broad before him
spread,—

He looking landward from the brow of some great sea-cape's
 head,
 Bray, or Ben Edar—sees beneath, in silent pageant grand,
 Slow fields of sunshine spread o'er fields of rich corn-bearing
 land;
 Red glebe and meadow margin green commingling to the view
 With yellow stubble, browning woods and upland tracts of
 blue;
 Then sated with the pomp of fields, turns seaward, to the
 verge
 Where, mingling with the murmuring wash made by the far
 down surge,
 Comes up the clangorous song of birds unseen, that low
 beneath,
 Poised off the rock, ply underfoot, and 'mid the blossoming
 heath
 And mint-sweet herb that loves the ledge rare-aired, at ease
 reclined,
 Surveys the wide pale-heaving floor crisped by a curling wind;
 With all its shifting, shadowy belts, and chasing scopes of
 green,
 Sun-strewn, foam-freckled, sad-embossed, and blackening
 squalls between
 And slant, cerulean-skirted showers that with a drowsy sound
 Heard inward of ebullient waves, stalk all the horizon
 round."

The Vision passes away. Lafinda urges the dying man to penitence—

" 'My sins,' said Congal, 'and my deeds of strife and blood-shed seem

No longer mine, but as the shapes and shadows of a dream :
 And I myself as one oppressed with sleep's deceptive shows,
 Awaking only now to life, when life is at its close.' "

He dies. Four seniors advance through the wicket,
 raise the body of the King on a bier, and bear it into
 the convent close. They urge the Arch-Bard to take
 refuge in that holy sanctuary, as the valley is rapidly

filling with the hosts that spare no foe. He refuses the proffered protection—

“For since my King has found the peace I seek to share,
outside

Your Saint’s enclosure, here will I the will of heaven abide.”

Few can peruse these extracts without perceiving that novel to English readers as is such a poetic theme, and embarrassing as are a few of the Gaelic names, this work belongs to the “great” style of poetry, that style which is characterised by simplicity, breadth of effect, a careless strength full of movement, but with nothing of the merely “sensational” about it, and an entire absence of those unclassic tricks that belong to meaner verse. It has caught thoroughly that Epic character so remarkable in those Bardic Legends which were transmitted orally through ages when Homer must have been a name unknown in Ireland. If the speeches had been shorter, and the illustrations of ancient history less frequent, the poem would have been more artistic and shapely, more brief, and, to the ordinary reader, more effective ; but, on the other hand, it would have been less like its originals, and would have lost much that must be of real value to the student of Irish archæology.

Sir Samuel Ferguson’s poetry is delightful in its lyrical and elegiac vein as well as in its narrative. A better specimen of it can hardly be referred to than “Aideen’s Grave.” Fionn, the Fingal of Macpherson, was the General of the “*Fenians*,” that far-famed Irish army enlisted alike out of all the five kingdoms

of Ireland for their defence from invasion, and was thus the *military* King of all Ireland. Jealousies arose between him and the Provincial Kings ; and after a long period not only of prosperity, but of practical domination, the whole Fenian army was annihilated at the battle of Gavra, A.D. 284. In that battle fell the youthful warrior Oscar, son of the poet Ossian, in Irish, Oisín, and grandson of Fionn. Aídeen, the wife of Oscar, died of grief at her husband's death. She was the daughter of Angus of Ben Edar, in modern language the Hill of Howth. Aídeen was buried, according to tradition, under a Cromlech on the promontory of Howth, that most beautiful of all the hills that overlook the bay of Dublin, over whose blue expanse its cliffs and heathy crests ken, to the south the exquisitely shaped mountains of Wicklow, made fairer by distance ; while from the north the mountains of Mourne gleam upon them through sea-mist and cloud. The surviving Fenian warriors are said to have attended Aídeen's obsequies : and her dirge is in this poem supposed to have been sung by Ossian ; though, in this instance, it has not been the poet's aim to imitate closely the manner of Erin's olden song, rich as it is in allusions to the olden time.

“ They hewed the stone ; they heaped the cairn ;
Said Ossian, ‘ In a queenly grave
We leave her, ’mong her hills of fern,
Between the cliff and wave.

“ ‘ The cliff behind stands clear and bare,
And bare, above the heathery steep
Scales the clear heaven's expanse, to where
The Danaan Druids sleep.

“ ‘ And all the sands that, left and right,
The grassy isthmus-ridge confine,
In yellow bars lie bare and bright
Among the sparkling brine.

“ ‘ The humming of the noontide bees,
The lark’s loud carol all day long,
And, borne on evening’s salted breeze,
The clanking sea-bird’s song

“ ‘ Shall round her airy chamber float,
And with the whispering winds and streams
Attune to Nature’s tenderest note
The tenor of her dreams.

“ ‘ And oft, at tranquil eve’s decline
When full tides lip the Old Green Plain,
The lowing of Moynalty’s kine
Shall round her breathe again,

“ ‘ In sweet remembrance of the days
When, duteous in the lowly vale,
Unconscious of my Oscar’s gaze,
She fill’d the fragrant pail,

“ ‘ And, duteous, from the running brook
Drew water for the bath; nor deemed
A king did on her labour look,
And she a fairy seemed.

“ ‘ But when the wintry frosts begin,
And in their long-drawn lofty flight,
The wild geese with their airy din
Distend the ear of night,

“ ‘ And when the fierce De Danaan ghosts
At midnight from their peak come down,
When all around the enchanted coasts
Despairing strangers drown.

“ ‘ Then o’er our lady’s placid dream,
Where safe from storms she sleeps, may steal

Such joy as will not misbeseem
A Queen of men to feel :

“ ‘ Such thrill of free defiant pride
As rapt her in her battle car
At Gavra, when by Oscar’s side
She rode the ridge of war.

“ ‘ No more, dispelling battle’s gloom,
Shall son for me from fight return ;
The great, green rath’s ten-acred tomb
Lies heavy on his urn.

“ ‘ A cup of bodkin-pencill’d clay
Holds Oscar ; mighty heart and limb
One handful now of ashes grey ;
And she has died for him.

“ ‘ And here, hard by her natal bower
On lone Ben Edar’s side we strive
With lifted rock and sign of power
To keep her name alive.

“ ‘ That while, from circling year to year,
Her Ogham-lettered stone is seen,
The Gael shall say, “ Our Fenians here
Entombed their loved Aideen.”

“ ‘ Farewell ! The strength of men is worn ;
The night approaches dark and chill :
Sleep till perchance an endless morn
Descend the glittering hill.’

“ ‘ Of Oscar and Aideen bereft,
So Ossian sang. The Fenians sped
Three mighty shouts to heaven ; and left
Ben Edar to the dead.”

The specimens of Sir Samuel Ferguson’s poetry here presented need no elaborate comment. Obviously its qualities are those characteristic of the

noble, not the ignoble, poetry, viz. passion, imagination, vigour, an epic largeness of conception, wide human sympathies, vivid and truthful description ; while with these it unites none of the vulgar stimulants for exhausted or morbid poetic appetites, whether the epicurean seasoning, the sceptical, or the revolutionary. Its diction is pure, its metre full of variety ; and with these merits, common to all true poetry, it unites an insight which only a man of genius can possess into the special characteristics of those ancient times and manners which are so frequently its subject. His Irish poetry is Irish, not, like a good deal which bears that name, *i.e.* by dint of being bad English, while stuffed with but the vulgarer accidents, not the essential characteristics of Gaelic Ireland—not thus, but by having the genuine Gaelic spirit in it. That spirit, like the Irish airs, its most authentic expression, has much of the minor key about it, and many “shrill notes of anger” besides ; but alike with its sadness, its fierceness, and its wild fits of mirth, a witching tenderness is mingled ; and all those qualities are largely found in Sir Samuel Ferguson’s poetry. Whoever follows his footsteps up the purple glens of old Erin will not fail to hear the wild slogan of the clan, and farther off “the horns of Elfland faintly blowing.” Such poetry can hardly fail sooner or later to conquer that difficulty which the most accomplished Englishmen often find in understanding poetry which worthily illustrates the highest Irish themes, even when the critic is patient with modern Irish comedy in its vulgarest

forms. Poetry on its lower levels will gratify low appetites, notwithstanding serious diversities in national tastes: it is when poetry deals worthily with what is at once high and characteristic that the diversities and latent antagonisms of national tastes are tested, such diversities as Mr. Matthew Arnold has admirably illustrated in his essay on "Celtic Literature." Whether Sir Samuel Ferguson's poetry is destined to become ever well known either in the land of his forefathers or in that land whose ancient annals he has illustrated so well, few can guess; but it is at least as likely to interest Englishmen as those Irishmen who prefer the aspirations of modern continental Socialists to the glories of their country in the ages of Loyalty and of Faith. In both countries *Conary* and *Congal* will find readers, however; and their award will be, "The author of these poems added another string to the great English harp—the Gaelic string."

■

IV

COVENTRY PATMORE'S POETRY

[Written on Mr. C. Patmore's *Angel in the House*, and on the first edition of his *Unknown Eros*, his later volumes not having then been published.]

I.—THE "ANGEL IN THE HOUSE"¹

WITHIN the last few years several poems have been written with the aim of versifying the manners of the day, but the instances of failure among the poetic aspirants have been more numerous than those in which they have hit the mark. Some of them have split upon the rock of politics, or rather of party spleen; for the genuine political relations are so closely connected with the deeper interests of man, human and moral, and respond so quickly beneath the fiery breath of imaginative passion, that they cannot but be included within the domain of genuine poetry. Others, instead of representing, have caricatured modern life. They seem to have forgotten that the railway whistle

¹ The *Angel in the House*. London: Bell and Sons.

and the smoke of the factory chimney are but accidents of our age, as powder and patch were accidents of a preceding one, and that the true life of the nineteenth century must lie deeper. Still worse does the failure become when, in the desire to be familiar, the poet has substituted the slang of the day for the less offensive conventionality of a stilted diction.

Of the longer poems which attempt exclusively to describe the finer emotions of modern society, the most original and the most artistic is Mr. Coventry Patmore's *Angel in the House*; a poem, the existence of which is better than a thousand *à priori* arguments in favour of the school to which it belongs. Mr. Patmore's hero does not hide his nineteenth century extraction in tartan or plaid, or even in "homely russet brown;" he is a young man of good birth and gentle breeding; has won university honours, and lectured at the neighbouring institute. The lady of his love is one of the three daughters of a certain Dean of Salisbury. The scene lies chiefly in the cathedral close or near to it, and the incidents of the poem are the familiar occurrences of English domestic life. The task Mr. Patmore has undertaken is to trace, with no more florid colouring and no more elaborate decorations than these, the ebb and flow of those feelings which are in every rank of life the well-head of poetry.

The *Angel in the House* is a tale in verse, the hero of which sings the wooing and winning of his

bride. The interest of the poem is studiously rendered independent of vicissitudes ; the merit of it consists principally in its refined and delicate execution. Such a mode of treatment, while it increases the difficulty of the performance, in proportion as it foregoes the excitements derived from romantic adventure, is doubtless necessitated by the author's desire to illustrate ordinary, not exceptional, modern life. This necessity has been turned, like difficulties of position or material in the hands of a real architect, to no small account. Renouncing the stimulus of curiosity, the poet has derived the interest of his work from higher sources, the philosophic analysis of the affections, and a descriptive power equally harmonious and vivid. The structure of the poem divides itself into two classes of compositions ; the former entitled Preludes, and consisting in part of reflections on life and character, the latter of a series of descriptive Pictures.

The narrative opens with a description of the return of its hero to an abode which, in earlier times, had been occasionally his home.

“Once more I came to Sarum Close,
With joy half memory, half desire,
And breath'd the sunny air that rose
And blew the shadows o'er the spire,
And tossed the lilac's scented blooms,
And sway'd the chesnut's thousand cones,
And fill'd my nostrils with perfumes,
And shaped the clouds in waifs and zones,
And wafted down the serious strain
Of Sarum bells, when, true to time,
I reach'd the Dean's, with heart and brain
That trembled to the trembling chime.”—(P. 16.)

He finds his old friend—

“ By widowhood more than winters bent,
But settled in a cheerful mind,”

and with him his three daughters, much changed from what they were in their childish days. The eldest has forgotten prudery, and developed into fearless grace ; the second, formerly pale, sickly, and wholly absorbed in thoughts of the next world, has grown reconciled to this one ; while the youngest has thrown aside her hoop to pursue graver attractions. The picture of the Deanery, with its

“ Dim rich lustre of old oak
And crimson velvet's glowing gloom,

is, in the best sense, English.

“ Something that abode endued
With temple-like repose, an air
Of life's kind purposes pursued
With ordered freedom, sweet and fair.
A tent pitched in a world not right
It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,
On tranquil faces bore the light
Of duties beautifully done,
And humbly, though they had few peers,
Kept their own laws, which seemed to be
The fair sum of six thousand years'
Traditions of civility.”—(P. 21.)

Not without some wayward movements, and a slight inclination at first to fix itself on the wrong sister, the young man's love attaches itself to Honoria, the eldest ; a fact with which he first becomes acquainted when he finds her seated next a certain handsome cousin, who had come to take leave before

embarking for a cruise in the Levant. After a morning call, in which he walks with his new friends about their garden, discusses the flower show and the ball, admires the prize-pinks and the prize-book, counts the apricots on a single tree, and feeds the gold fish, the lover rides home, throws himself on his knees—

“And vow'd to love, and prayed to wed,
The maiden who had grown so dear.”

Her father's consent is narrated with an amusing particularity.

“A dear, good girl ! she'd have
Only three thousand pounds as yet ;
More bye and bye.”

This sum, with his own fortune of £600 per annum, and a small park, wood, and expectations, seems to the lover amply sufficient, if we may judge from the following striking passage—

“What's that which, ere I spake, was gone,
So joyful and intense a spark
That, whilst o'erhead the wonder shone,
The day, before but dull, was dark ?
I do not know ; but this I know,
That, had the splendour lived a year,
The truth that I some heavenly show
Did see, could not be now more clear.
This know I too : might mortal breath
Express the passion then inspired,
Evil would die a natural death,
And nothing transient be desired ;
And error from the soul would pass,
And leave the senses pure and strong
As sunbeams. But the best, alas,
Has neither memory nor tongue.”

The lover has still, however, to live on hope, not

gratitude. The theft of a glove, and the present, skilfully excused, of three violets, "two white, one blue," said to come from the three sisters, but actually enclosed in a note written by one of them only, is too unsubstantial fare for him ; and the contrast between his ardour and the happy serenity of the maiden who—"artless in her very art," looks down on her votary with lunar smiles,—is well described in a canto entitled "*Ætna and the Moon.*" Half sanguine, half in despair, the lover resolves to decide his fate.

" 'Honorio,' I began—No more.
The Dean, by ill or happy hap,
Came home ; and Wolf burst in before,
And put his nose upon her lap."

He defers the trial, and accompanies the young Sirens of the Deanery on an expedition to Stonehenge. This canto is in itself an exquisite idyl.

" By the great stones we chose our ground
For shade ; and there, in converse sweet,
Took luncheon. On a little mound
Sat the three ladies ; at their feet
I sat ; and smelt the heathy smell,
Pluck'd harebells, turn'd the telescope
To the country round. My life went well,
For once, without the wheels of hope ;
And I despised the Druid rocks
That scowl'd their chill gloom from above,
Like churls whose stolid wisdom mocks
The lightness of immortal love ;
And, as we talk'd, my spirit quaff'd
The sparkling winds ; the candid skies
At our untruthful strangeness laugh'd ;
I kissed with mine her smiling eyes ;
And sweet familiarness and awe
Prevailed that hour on either part,

And in the eternal light I saw
 That she was mine ; though yet my heart
 Could not conceive, nor would confess
 Such contentation ; and there grew
 More form and more fair stateliness
 Than heretofore, between us two."—(P. 102.)

The lover does not escape such smaller calamities as beset our nineteenth century life. The Dean and his eldest daughter go to London for a month, and Salisbury Plain begins to lose its charm.

"She near, all for the time was well ;
 Hope's self, when we were far apart,
 With lonely feeling, *like the smell*
Of heath on mountains, fill'd my heart."

He stands a moment beside the railway carriage, gives her, to beguile the tedium of the journey, a priceless Tasso, which, merely for the pleasure of making a fruitless sacrifice, he hopes she may lose, and then—

"The bell rang, and, with shrieks like death,
 Link catching link, the long array,
 With ponderous pulse and fiery breath,
 Proud of its burden, swept away."

He mounts the hillside and watches the lessening line of white vapour as it trails along the green landscape ; indulges in evil forebodings, and doubts whether the most perfect of her sex may not be corrupted in London, forget him, and acquire

"The foolish, fashionable air
 Of knowing all, and feeling naught."

He returns past her house, hears the clock chiming through the lonely hall ; thinks how little Honoria is

really appreciated even by her sisters or the Dean, and feels convinced that her bird will be starved, and that her flowers will die for want of water. He stays for evening prayers, and strays home through the wood, listening to the blackbird who "talked by himself" amid the branches, of Honoria and desertion. She returns, however, and things go on again as before. The following passage, which proves that Love is capable of even teaching early rising, is an example of Mr. Patmore's singularly felicitous delineations of nature—

"I woke at three ; for I was bid
To breakfast with the Dean at nine,
And take his girls to church. I slid
My curtain, found the season fine,
And could not rest, so rose. The air
Was dark and sharp ; the roosted birds
Cheep'd, 'Here am I, sweet ; are you there ?'
On Avon's misty flats the herds
Expected, comfortless, the day,
Which slowly fired the clouds above ;
The cock screamed, somewhere far away ;
In sleep the matrimonial dove
Was brooding ; no wind waked the wood,
Nor moved the midnight river-damps,
Nor thrill'd the poplar ; quiet stood
The chesnut with its thousand lamps ;
The moon shone yet, but weak and drear,
And seemed to watch with bated breath,
The landscape, all made sharp and clear
By stillness, as a face by death."—(P. 123.)

The love-trouble, however, is not on one side only. The following passages are an analysis of maiden love in its birth, growth, and progress, written with great subtlety of discernment and richness of poetry.

"She wearies with an ill unknown ;
 In sleep she sobs, and seems to float,
 A water-lily, all alone
 Within a lonely castle moat ;
 And as the full-moon, spectral, lies
 Within the crescent's gleaming arms,
 The present shows her heedless eyes
 A future dim with vague alarms,
 She sees, and yet she scarcely sees ;
 For, life-in-life not yet begun,
 Too many are its mysteries
 For thought to fix t'wards any one."—(P. 143.)

Sometimes resistance seems impossible—

"Advancing stepless, quick and still,
 As in the grass a serpent glides,
 He fascinates her fluttering will,
 Then terrifies with dreadful strides.
 At first, there's nothing to resist ;
 He fights with all the forms of peace ;
 He comes about her like a mist
 With subtle, swift, unseen increase."

At other times insensibility seems inhuman—

"How sweetly he implies her praise !
 His tender talk, his gentle tone,
 The manly worship in his gaze,
 It nearly makes her heart his own.
 With what an air he speaks her name ;
 His manner always recollects
 Her sex, and still the woman's claim
 Is taught its scope by his respects."

These passages will have prepared the reader for his proposal and its results—

"Twice rose, twice died my trembling word ;
 The faint and frail Cathedral chimes
 Spake time in music, and we heard
 The chafers rustling in the limes.

Her dress that touch'd me where I stood ;
The warmth of her confided arm ;
Her bosom's gentle neighbourhood ;
Her pleasure in her power to charm ;
Her look, her love, her form, her touch,
The least seem'd most by blissful turn,—
Blissful but that it pleased too much,
And taught the wayward soul to yearn.
It was as if a harp with wires
Was traversed by the breath I drew ;
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
She, answering, owned she loved me too."

The sternest of readers will not grudge this lover his moment of triumph ; but Honoria fears that she has yielded too soon—

"My queen was crouching at my side,
By love unsceptred and brought low,
Her awful garb of maiden pride
All melted into tears like snow ;
The mistress of my reverent thought,
Whose praise was all I asked of fame,
In my close-watched approval sought
Protection as from change and blame.
Her soul, which I had loved to invest
With pity for my poor desert,
Buried its face within my breast.
Like a pet fawn by hunters hurt."

"He can take pains" is said to have been one of the highest forms of approval with which Mr. Rogers gratified a young poet ; and it is obvious that the musical flow of these lines, and the delicacy of the sentiment they convey, owe much of their charm to the genuine art bestowed on the composition. Yet the delicate force of Mr. Patmore's diction is derived apparently rather from that habitual carefulness which

gradually weds itself with spontaneity of style, than from elaborate correction. In its precision it never loses flexibility, nor does it sacrifice clearness in order to gain depth and grace. While eminently picturesque, it has also a remarkable power of expressing long trains of consecutive thought, not only without pedantry, but in language familiar and colloquial.

The reader will not fail to detect the secret of Mr. Patmore's success in the poetical treatment of modern life. The picture with which he has presented us is not a caricature of the accidents belonging to modern society. Such accidents find their due place, but no more, in his verse; and they are treated with that skill which indicates, by a touch, the latent poetry of which nothing, except moral evil, is wholly deprived. But if the conventionalities of the day admit of being thus introduced, and laid aside, it is because our interest is riveted, throughout the bulk of the poem, by those relations and affections which belong to no age and no place in particular, and into the true character of which Mr. Patmore evinces so profound an insight. He appreciates the dignity of the social ties, and thus treading upon firm, unyielding ground, he can afford to sport with the lighter side of his theme. His philosophy of human life claims, as he tells us, no novelty; if it did, it could be little more than the last piece of charlatanism lifted up by that circling wheel which is ever replacing detected with forgotten quackeries. But truths in themselves not new, become new when they have been forgotten or petrified

into truisms. With some the fancy acquires a daintiness which loses the fine in the superfine, and can only condescend to touch the honest realities of nature through the intervention of a white kid glove. Hence comes the sentimental school of versifiers, by whom Love is treated as if we lived in a moonlight world, and were too delicate to bear sunshine. The converse evil has yet more fatally debased literature at many periods, especially in that diseased school which, under the guise of celebrating passion, sings in reality the blind triumph of animal instincts thinly veiled. How many a passage in modern verse, if tried in a crucible sufficiently potent, would leave behind a residuum as earthly as the worst passages of Catullus and Ovid! Such writers need to know that passion, in proportion as it is truly human, is a fire pure and purifying; that it is lighted from above, if fed in part from below; and that its mere material fuel is at least transformed as it is consumed. The gnomes of the world poetic are more dangerous than the sylphs; but the cause of their error is the same. They have missed the true philosophy of man.

From these blemishes Mr. Patmore's work is entirely free; his *Honorias*' unsullied purity is heightened by the strain of elevated tenderness pervading the poem, and giving to it a refinement without effort and without affectation. In its manly and healthy cheer, the *Angel in the House* is an effectual protest against the less wholesome poetry of the age, as, in its serenity, it contrasts with that "spasmodic

school" which delights in jerks and jolts, and tolerates no music that has not a dash of discord in it.

Another attribute of Mr. Patmore's style is yet more remarkable than his descriptive skill. His habit of justly balanced observation and reflection is constantly breaking forth in couplets of quaint and sententious subtlety, thus—

"How wise in all she ought to know,
How ignorant of all beside!"

Or again—

"Love in tears too noble is
For pity, save of Love in smiles."

Sometimes it is mixed with pathos, as in the description of a disappointment—

"His fondness comes about his heart,
As milk comes when the babe is dead."

Or again—

"Through passionate duty love flames higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone."

At other times it is mixed with irony, as—

"How able her persuasions are
To prove, her reasons to persuade."

In the first edition of the poem this reflective vein presented itself in the more salient form of poetical aphorisms, under the name of "The Sentences," appended to the descriptive passages. But poetry refuses to take up more of philosophy than it can hold in solution; all mixtures less perfect cloud and discolour her clear element; and least of all can we be satisfied with the rough incrustation on the chalice or

the sediment that lies at the bottom. The present edition is much improved by the rejection of these passages, and would be further improved by the rejection of some of them which have been allowed to remain in an altered form.

In the following lines the poet's warfare against both a fantastic and a materialist philosophy is not the less successful for assuming a playful form. Here is a fable as clearly cut as a cameo—one which might find its place in the Greek Anthology.

THE KITES.

"I saw three Cupids (so I dreamed),
Who made three kites, on which were drawn,
In letters that like roses gleamed,
"Plato," "Anacreon," and "Vaughan."
The boy who held by Plato tried
His airy venture first; all sail,
It heavenward rushed, till scarce descried,
Then pitch'd, and dropp'd for want of tail.
Anacreon's Love, with shouts of mirth
That pride of spirit thus should fall,
To his kite link'd a lump of earth,
And, lo, it would not soar at all.
Last, my disciple freighted his
With a long streamer made of flowers,
The children of the sod, and this
Rose in the sun and flew for hours."

II.—"THE UNKNOWN EROS, AND OTHER ODES,"¹ 1877

This remarkable volume of poems is altogether unlike most of the poetry which has of late years appeared among us. It consists of a series of poems,

¹ *The Unknown Eros, and other Odes.* London: Bell and Sons.

many of them odes, in the strictest sense of the term, others in a laxer sense, embodying trains of very lofty and occasionally of somewhat mystical thought, in subtle, expressive, and musical language. Their chief characteristics are continuity of meditation and richness of illustrative imagery, but they also abound in passion—that is, passion in its intellectual and imaginative, not its sensuous form. The poem implies that the author of the book does not expect a large audience at the present time—

“ Therefore no plaint be mine
Of listeners none,
No hope of rendered use or proud reward,
In hasty times and hard ;
But chants as of a lonely thrush's throat
At latest eve,
That does in each calm note
Both joy and grieve ;
Notes few and strong and fine,
Gilt with sweet day's decline,
And sad with promise of a different sun.”

These Odes are written not in stanzas, but in an irregular metre, varying from very short to very long lines, the elastic modulations of which are in harmony with thoughts which rise and fall obedient to no external law, and yet, like the cadences of an Æolian harp, follow a law of their own. The poem which gives its name to the volume, “The Unknown Eros,” may be cited as an example—

“ O Unknown Eros, sire of awful bliss,
What portent and what Delphic word,
Such as in form of snake forbodes the bird,
Is this ?

In me life's even flood
What eddies thus?
What in its ruddy orbit lifts the blood
Like a perturbed moon of Uranus
Reaching to some great world in ungauged darkness hid;
And whence
This rapture of the sense
Which, by thy whisper bid,
Reveres with obscure rite and sacramental sign
A bond I know not of, nor dimly can divine;
This subject loyalty which longs
For chains and thongs
Woven of gossamer and adamant,
To bind me to my unguessed want,
And so to lie,
Between those quivering plumes that through fine ether pant
For hopeless, sweet eternity?"

The doctrine adumbrated in this poem is more distinctly illustrated in several other odes, which, if not to be called "love-poems," are yet expositions of the poet's philosophy of love. The most important of these is entitled, "*Deliciæ Sapientiæ de Amore*." According to its teaching, Love is so closely connected with Reverence, that each might bear the other's name. It says of the lover—

"How envies he the ways
Of yonder hopeless star,
And so would laugh and yearn
With trembling lids eterne,
Ineffably content from infinitely far
Only to gaze
On his bright Mistress's responding rays,
That never know eclipse;
And, once in his long year,
With præternuptial ecstasy and fear,
By the delicious law of that ellipse
Wherein all citizens of ether move,
With hastening pace to come

Nearer, though never near,
 His Love
 And always inaccessible sweet Home ;
 There on his path doubly to burn,
 Kiss'd by her doubled light
 That whispers of its source,
 The ardent secret ever clothed with Night
 Then go forth in new force
 Towards a new return,
 Rejoicing as a Bridegroom on his course."

'This Palace of Love looks so like a Temple of Vesta,
 that it is only fair to state that it flings its gates open
 to *all* who have either retained or recovered the first
 brightness of the soul, to—

" The wedded few that honour in sweet thought
 And glittering will,
 So freshly from the garden gather still
 The lily sacrificed ; "

—and to those not less in whom—

" Living Love yet blushes for dead shame.
 There of pure Virgins, none
 Is fairer seen,
 Save one,
 Than Mary Magdalene."

The affections celebrated in this book, while
 spiritual, are eminently human also. Not out of
 harmony with this poem is an ode of a severer order,
 singing the praises of "Pain." A self-indulgent age
 like ours will be little disposed to such a strain. It
 might, notwithstanding, find its capacities for joy
 indefinitely increased if it adopted that philosophy,
 even to the moderate extent of not hunting its pleas-
 ures to death, and not shrinking from what slight

endurance is implied in the most obviously necessary self-sacrifice. The ode thus begins—

“ O Pain ! Love's mystery,
Close next of kin
To joy and heart's delight,
Low Pleasure's opposite,
Choice food of sanctity,
And medicine of sin,
Angel, whom even they that will pursue
Pleasure with hell's whole gust
Find that they must
Perversely woo,
My lips, thy live coal touching, speak thee true.
Thou sear'st my flesh, O Pain,
But brand'st for arduous peace my languid brain,
And bright'nest my dull view,
Till I, for blessing, blessing give again,
And my roused spirit is
Another fire of bliss,
Wherein I learn,
Feelingly, how the pangful purging fire
Shall furiously burn
With joy, not only of assured desire,
But also present joy,
Of seeing the life's corruption, stain by stain,
Vanish in the clear heat of Love irate,
And, fume by fume, the sick alloy
Of luxury, sloth, and hate
Evaporate ;
Leaving the man, so dark erewhile,
The mirror merely of God's smile.”

These are specimens of a style of poetry now rare among us. It may remind some persons of Crashaw, though the resemblance is less than the dissimilarity, his exaggerated quaintnesses never occurring, while his rich diction and impassioned metrical cadences are combined with a larger imagination and

with deeper thought. By many the work will be called obscure. Against several of the poems that charge may indeed be justly brought, though by no means against all those which for their appreciation require both cultivated minds and careful attention. "Obscurity" is a word with many meanings. Obscure poetry of one kind suggests the idea that the author has acquired a trick of "thinking in shorthand" (if the phrase be permissible), and forgets that the reader has never been initiated into the mystery of his abbreviations. Under these circumstances, whole pages are studied with a painful doubt on the reader's part as to whether he may not be suffering from an incipient softening of the brain; and when the meaning has been expounded, another puzzle arises, viz. why such thoughts might not have been far more intelligibly expressed. This is not the darkness found in some of these poems. A different sort of obscurity is one which rises mainly out of the recondite nature of the theme. It exists not seldom in the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, who would probably have pleaded in their defence the example of Dante. This is the obscurity which occasionally marks the work before us. In some instances a small effort on the writer's part would very much diminish it. A poet should bear in mind that where the subject of a poem is abstruse there is the more need that the language should be as unequivocal as words can be made. Where the topic is familiar, the reader's guess at once interprets the doubtful expression; but where the

reader deals with a profound subject, or one new to him, he can only follow, he cannot correct his guide. A doubtful "antecedent," a word that may be used either as a verb or a substantive, an allusion not explained, the lack of a title to the poem, any one of these accidents may turn the reader's feet into labyrinthine paths, and add to the perplexities of a journey which at best must be often under shade. Unfortunately it is often when writing on philosophical themes that a poet becomes most preoccupied by his own thoughts, and most forgets those "hooks and eyes" of style then especially necessary. The author sees too much besides to see, unaided, where his reader will halt; and his monitor should be one largely qualified for the office by the two great gifts of dullness and frankness. He is a captious reader who quarrels with occasional obscure passages in meditative poetry, but the general scope of a poem should always be plain. It will otherwise lose in passion and power, as well as in light.

Several of these poems are political. In them obscurity is banished by an ardour which will be appreciated alike by those who sympathise with the opinions expressed and those who dislike them. Here is a noble protest against the "peace-at-any-price" school—

"Remnant of Honour, brooding in the dark
Over your bitter cark,
Staring, as Rispah stared, astonished, seven days,
Upon the corpses of so many sons,
Who loved her once,
Dead in the dim and lion-haunted ways,

Who could have dreamed
That times should come like these !
Prophets indeed taught lies when we were young,
And people loved to have it so ;
For they teach well who teach their scholar's tongue !
But that the foolish both should gaze,
With feeble, fascinated face,
Upon the wan crest of the coming woe,
The billow of earthquake underneath the seas,
And sit at ease,
Or stand agape,
Without so much as stepping back to 'scape,

In such an hour,
When eager hands are fettered and too few,
And hearts alone have leave to bleed,
Speak ; for a good word then is a good deed."

Not less excellent is a poem on one side of a matter which has also another and a very different side. It is Milton who says of certain pretenders—

"Licence they mean when they cry 'Liberty.'"

And apparently it is in the same spirit that the author of these Odes denounces a certain Janus-faced phantom, which rises before his ken over the troubled horizon of European civilisation,—a Power which, seen from one side, is Jacobinism or Communism, and seen from the other is Cæsarism. Against this portent he invokes the aid of the *inactive* Good, who, depressed or apathetic, meet the claims of public duty with Dante's "gran rifiuto"—

"Ye outlawed Best, who yet are bright
With the sunken light,
Whose common style
Is Virtue at her gracious ease,

The flower of olden sanctities,
Ye haply trust, by love's benignant guile, ,
To lure the dark and selfish brood
To their own hated good."

At the same time, he warns this class of meditative mourners that it is no longer for them—

" To guide
The great ship helmless on the swelling tide
Of that presumptuous Sea,
Unlit by sun or moon, yet inly bright
With lights innumerable that give no light,
Flames of corrupted will and scorn of right,
Rejoicing to be free."

The poet will doubtless admit that the abuses arising from prescriptive tyranny are not less fatal to man's best interests, and among others, to poetry and every manly art, than are the crimes enacted by false liberty. It is certain that each evil produces the other.

The themes of these lyrics are very numerous. Here is one in which no one will complain of too abstract a thoughtfulness. It is entitled "The Toys"—

" My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes,
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hard words and unkiss'd,
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own ;

For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said :
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness.' "

Not less touching, indeed even more profoundly so, are the lines entitled "If I were dead." These two poems, when contrasted with those already quoted, show how wide is the region through which Mr. Patmore's imagination ranges.

" 'If I were dead, you'd sometimes say, Poor Child !'
The dear lips quiver'd as they spake,
And the tears brake
From eyes which, not to grieve me, brightly smiled.
Poor Child, poor Child !
I seem to hear your laugh, your talk, your song.
It is not true that Love will do no wrong.
Poor Child !
And did you think, when so you cried and smiled,
How I, in lonely nights, should lie awake,
And of those words your full avengers make ?
Poor Child, poor Child !
And now, unless it be

That sweet amends thrice told are come to thee,
O, God, have Thou *no* mercy upon me !
Poor Child !”

Among the most beautiful of the poems not here quoted are those entitled “Tired Memory,” “Departure,” “The Day after To-morrow,” “The Standards,” “Let be,” “Victory in Defeat,” “Remembered Grace,” and “Faint yet Pursuing.”

Mr. Patmore's poetry has well deserved the wide circulation it has met both in England and America. His *Angel in the House* was at once recognised as a vivid, as well as a lovely and gracious picture of what is best alike in England's rural scenery and in a country life brightened by imaginative culture, and graced by the happy traditions of a land blessed at once with liberty and order. The poet had not shrunk from the difficulties that belong to the delineation of domestic affections, which, when unskilfully executed, often recalls the old adage, “Speech is silver, but silence is gold;” yet he had described them ever as seen at their poetic side: the freshness of the fields and farms was in his book; and the chime from old church towers mingled with the bird-songs from the pleasaunce, and the merry cry from the harvest field. The poems of this, his second volume, have risen into a higher region, and added to his youthful poetry a nobler though a kindred element. They have dealt boldly with high ethical truths, and chiefly those which fling down a heavenly lustre on the plain of earthly life. In that volume he has also

dealt with arduous spiritual problems, and, excepting in a very few instances, with eminent success. In it he has sung the sorrows of life as well as its joys—the lover's bereavement, the patriot's sorrow and his care. What his admirers have now to desire of him is that he should give them many more poems, continuing thus to enlarge the range of his themes, while treating them with the same elevation of sentiment, vigour, expressiveness of diction, and metrical felicity which characterise those already published.

V

A POLICY FOR IRELAND

JANUARY 1887

WE are often asked, "What would be a true Irish policy? It is easy to object, but what would you recommend?" The following remarks are an answer to that question:—

The hand that governs Ireland effectually must have three characteristics:—1. It must be strong and steady. 2. It must be just. 3. It must be beneficent, and even sympathetic, where sympathy does not imply that weakness which encourages expectations never destined to be fulfilled.

The policy fit for Ireland must be one wholly simple; an equivocal policy will be sure to end in defeat; everything that is ingenious, and looks clever, will turn out a mistake in the end. Plain principle must be faithfully followed. That compromise often necessary in dealing with practical politics must not either violate or evade principle; though it may make the application of principle a gradual process. Above

all, a sound policy must be one directed by facts, not phrases, and by judgment, not rhetoric.

1. To begin with the "strong hand,"—the chief thing to be done is to put down the tyranny of the National League, which is a Government of chronic revolt, reigning and ruling in place of the Queen's Government, and resting on the basis of a coercion alike anarchical and despotic. It is an ignominy which civilisation cannot afford. Till that tyranny has been put down, the omission will, in Ireland, be attributed to fear. When it has been put down a conviction will arise that, the bubble having burst, the reign of Law is restored. Outrage also must be put down fearlessly. Justice would probably be promoted by the enactment for Ireland, if not for England also, of laws which already exist in Scotland as regards "change of venue," and other matters of detail—laws which protect the innocent from immoral and illegal combinations. Unanimity should not be required in Irish, or English, as it is not in Scotch juries.

2. The "just hand" is the hand which "deals equally" with England and Ireland, so far as that expression carries a meaning and is not a phrase only, but which at the same time distinguishes righteously between two things which some people are skilful enough, and others stupid enough, to confound—these things being "equality of treatment" and "identical institutions." "Identical institutions" are things which we should doubtless make our aim, and to which a wise policy would by degrees approximate ;

but at the present moment "identical institutions" would in many cases work not the same, or similar, but opposite effects in England and Ireland. A "Volunteer" army in England is an army of defence; in Ireland it might, at present, be one of revolt. In Ireland Boards of Guardians, exclusively popular, would mean the destruction of all landed property, through unlimited "outdoor relief"; while Educational Councils, chosen as Members of Parliament are chosen, might convert the schoolmasters into "Tribunes of the People." In the Grand Jury system there should be some extension of popular power; but this may be effected, as has been clearly shown in a pamphlet¹ on that subject, without the change being of such an extreme character as would, under existing circumstances, waste the remaining resources of Ireland in a system of jobbery. In whatever "local centres" of Irish administration may be created, when this can be safely done, the class which chiefly represents education and property should have its full proportionate power, as well as the class at present, unfortunately for itself, submissive to the party of revolution.

It was not "equality of treatment" when, in dealing with popular representation, as much power was suddenly given to the Irish democracy, after half a century of political education, as the English democracy was thought fit for after an education of two centuries and a half. If a franchise nominally the same as that which

¹ *Thoughts on the Grand Jury System of Ireland*, by Sir Stephen E. de Vere, Bart.

in England gives representation to all classes, in Ireland leaves the higher class practically without representation, *i.e.* places them in the condition of pariahs and slaves (the position the Catholic peasant occupied previously to Catholic Emancipation), this "identity of institutes" is not "equality of treatment," but a cynical denial of it, which, if unredressed, will leave "Home Rule," and therefore "Separation," only a question of time. Even Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill partially, though not practically, recognised this truth. It provided that in his proposed Irish Parliament there should be a second and higher franchise for the representation of the minority. Something approaching to what would later have become a "proportionate representation" of classes in Ireland might have been reached by the creation of electoral districts returning three members. That remains to be tried; but if it should prove to be too late, some other mode of redressing an intolerable wrong must be found, either through a double franchise or some other expedient, as the only remaining mode of substituting a real for a fraudulent "equality of treatment" for England and Ireland. Such a change would, it will be said, be difficult; but it is better to deal with difficulties than impossibilities; and that change, which would be an enfranchisement, not a disfranchisement, could probably be effected before the termination of the present Parliament, if preceded by wise legislation, and not precluded by legislation of an opposite character, for which many temptations may present them-

selves. The world is governed, on the long run, by facts, not fictions ; and if Ireland continues to boast a franchise which in England means " representation," and in Ireland " misrepresentation," she will retain the power of turning the balance of English parties ; and a cry for Separation will then arise in England herself, the nearer evil making men ignore the remoter. Till lately it was admitted as an axiom that property, as well as numbers, should be considered in Parliamentary Representation. That the educated and independent classes should not be represented even in proportion to their numbers, merely because they are also the propertied classes, against which those who " march through Rapine to Revolution " wage war, is that wrong which Burke stigmatised as a " horrible " ¹ injustice and imposture. If we are to regard as permanent a system by which ignorance and greed are to rule exclusively, and by which freedom of contract is suppressed, we shall have in Ireland, and that soon, but to choose between policies each of which is a policy of destruction. No place for hope will remain, because we shall have built a social fabric on what is a practical repudiation of the laws of man's moral nature. If, on the other hand, " dual proprietorship " must cease, why should not the practical disfranchisement of the propertied classes cease also ?

3. We come next to " the hand beneficent and sympathetic." The expression does not apply to that hand which cannot distinguish between honourable

¹ See footnote, p. 161.

and dishonourable compromise, and which, by way of making concessions to Ireland, makes concessions to the revolutionists who deceive, degrade, and torment her. Wise concessions are such only as avowedly aim at delivering the people of Ireland from that disastrous sway, and once more giving fair play to the nobler side of the Irish nature. That side of it remains unextinguished, though now eclipsed, by the shadow of the National League; and all measures are beneficent or the contrary, simply as they tend to abate the present demoralisation or to aggravate it. "Home Rule" means misrule and ruin both to Ireland and England; consequently all so-called concessions which have their faces turned *in the direction of Home Rule* are either blunders, or are tricks by which Ireland must be mystified, not benefited; by which the agitation for "Home Rule" must be prolonged; by which crimes which the best friends of Ireland deplore more than her worst enemies will be rewarded; by which the yoke which the National League has imposed upon the country will be sustained, and the demoralisation perpetuated. A small measure of Home Rule, where a large one—and something more—are avowedly desired and demanded, or a measure of local Irish Councils, practically equivalent to Home Rule, would be an "expedient," not a policy, like the "ransoms" paid in old times to buy off the Danish pirates. It would enable the revolutionists to make their demand for a large measure of Home Rule in the name not of a party stigmatised by liberal statesmen as

"steeped to the lips in treason," but of a quasi-Irish Parliament deliberately created by those statesmen, and to which countless Irishmen would, with entire sincerity, believe that a loyal allegiance was far more due than to what was lately called, for the first time by an English Minister, "*foreign*" legislation. To place the administration of Ireland in Local Councils would be practically to place in them her legislation also. On the other hand, while a cowardly or unintelligible and incoherent rule gives "its own way" to whatever is most heady and unscrupulous in Ireland, and thus practically denies to her what she most needs, viz. the steadying support of a just rule, we are absolutely bound to discard all prejudices which interfere with the concession, as speedily as is practicable, of whatever genuine benefits a friendly legislation can bestow upon her. Neither is that a wise policy which despises the sympathies of those governed, even while it has regard to their interests, where there is nothing unreasonable or dangerous connected with those sympathies, since we can only permanently cure disaffection by winning a people's affections. To win them in Ireland is by no means impossible; but they will never be won through a policy which professes to "govern through love" alone, and disparages by the nickname of "coercion" a Government's first duty, which is the enforcement of obedience to law. The humblest Irish peasant knows that communities are governed by love and fear, love on the part of the loyal, and fear on that of the disloyal; and he will love no rule which he cannot respect also.

The real measures of conciliation—that is, those which would conciliate, supposing sedition to be kept down and security restored, without which all legislation is a farce—are such as these, though, of course, their introduction would in some cases need to be a gradual process—

1. A measure of “land-purchase,” interfering with no rights, but tending to make a considerable part of Ireland pass into the hands of the occupiers on just terms and within a moderate time. The new “peasant-proprietors” should, however, be in addition to the existing gentlemen proprietors, not in substitution for them; since a social democracy must needs be supplemented by political institutes equally democratic, the permanent union between England and Ireland being thus rendered morally impossible. Property would be strengthened against the socialistic tendencies of the time in proportion as its base was widened, and as the accumulated charges upon it were defrayed by large but not forced sales. It is to be remarked that, if but half the land of Ireland should pass into the hands of the occupier, more than three-quarters of her occupiers would thus become proprietors; while that anti-revolutionary spirit which is the only guarantee for the safe use of the political privileges recently created, would be effectually called into existence, both by the possession of property and by the prospect of possessing it later. The cost would be far less than is supposed: aid would often not be needed in the case of large farms; and in many cases it might be

applied, not through the purchase of the holding, but through the equitable fining down of the rent by a free contract between landlord and tenant. The principle of free trade in land should be restored; and such quack remedies as "dual" or rather "plural" proprietorship abolished, a better substitute having thus been previously provided.

2. The education of Ireland should be of such a character as is preferred by Irish parents; and denominational colleges should be allowed the same advantages as are enjoyed by the secular. This is of primary importance. Till just claims are conceded, concessions will always be made to unjust.

3. Suitable residences, with a few acres of land attached to them, should be provided for the Catholic clergy. The Irish Church Settlement of 1869 handed over to the Protestant clergy, for a merely nominal sum, a property in residences and churches which Mr. Gladstone had estimated at £2,500,000. A clause was introduced into the Bill by the House of Lords, devoting out of the "Church surplus" one million to the providing of residences, with a few acres of land attached to each, for the Catholic clergy. That clause was thrown out in the House of Commons. The immense injury thus inflicted on the Irish poor, even more than on their clergy, ought to be remedied, as soon as it is practicable to effect that remedy. At present, in the West, the sick man has often no priest within a dozen miles of him.

4. A Board, not necessarily an elective, and certainly

not a merely elective one, should be created in Ireland for the transaction of Irish business relating to *purely material* affairs, such as railroad projects—business at present transacted in England, with much needless expense and loss of time, a practical plea being thus furnished for a visionary demand—Home Rule.

5. Considering that State aid, though seldom necessary for industrial enterprises in wealthy countries, has often been found of signal use to poor countries when advanced upon just and prudent terms, such aid ought not to be refused to Ireland on the mere ground that it is not required in England; though, of course, it should not be conceded where the concession would be opposed to the true principles of political economy, and not merely to the orthodox dicta of the “straighter sects” among political economists. The Empire, as well as Ireland, has an interest in the matter. Ireland’s poverty has long cost her much.

6. In those congested portions of Western Ireland where a population out of proportion to the present means of giving employment renders improvement impossible, and perpetuates a poverty which a bad harvest may change to a famine, liberal aid should, in spite of interested clamour, be advanced for emigration, due security being taken for its repayment.

Such seem to me the chief points of an Irish policy founded, not, like that of the recent converts to Home Rule, upon a merry despair, but upon a reasonable hope. It is despair when statesmen say, “You must surrender whatever Mr. Parnell’s eighty-five Members

demand," for such a surrender produces fresh demands, and is thus the beginning of a folly which admits of no end. And when the same statesmen add: "You may rest assured that their demands will prove moderate, and our concessions be wisely used," the hope thus quaintly supplementing the despair is not a reasonable one. A reasonable hope is based on the knowledge that the great wrongs of Ireland exist no more. They were redressed antecedently to the legislation and to the administration of the last six years. It is based, also, on a fact best known to those who live in Ireland, and who appreciate her many and great virtues while not blind to her faults. They know that even the humbler section of Irish society is by no means exclusively represented by those noisier spirits too long and most grievously led astray, to the dishonour and calamity of their country, both by an unscrupulous agitation such as Ireland never knew before, and by a statesmanship such as England never knew before.¹ There is a reserve of sense and right feeling in Ireland which a strong, just, and beneficent policy will not fail to elicit, provided that English statesmen prefer principles to clever expedients, and their country to their party.

¹ It is thus that Burke speaks of parliamentary representation: "To give therefore no more importance in the social order to such descriptions of men (he refers to the educated and propertied classes) than that of so many units is a horrible usurpation."—*Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*.

VI

PROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION

1. CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO THE IDEA INVOLVED IN IT

THE question of Proportionate Representation—although, owing to an accidental combination of circumstances, it may seem for the moment to be disposed of—is certain to recur, for to England its importance must ever increase, and to Ireland it is a question of life or death, as I have shown elsewhere.¹ It concerns the whole philosophy of politics, while by the superficial it is often treated as if it were but an arithmetical conundrum. In dealing with a serious matter of ethics we cannot make a beginning unless we separate the accidental from the essential, and contemplate the problem in the light of that idea which illustrates it. Let us thus contemplate “Proportionate Representation” in its connection with two

¹ *Ireland and Proportionate Representation*. Dublin: Hodges and Figgis, 1885.

things of which the modern world makes boast, without, however, at all times recognising their higher claims on our respect, viz. "the Nation," and "National Progress." Coleridge somewhere exclaims, "Oh for a statesman—a single one—who understands the living might inherent in a principle!" It will be well on the present occasion to confine our attention to the great principle at issue, discarding all subordinate matters of detail, and all that belongs but to the mere polemics of party. Such questions as the "Preferential Vote," however important, are thus outside our present theme. We have here to deal with "Proportionate Representation" in a form so simple that no one can charge it with complexity. According to the arrangements till lately most common in England, the majority, however small, was represented by two members; while the minority, however large, within the same electoral district, was left without representation, as it is now in the new single member districts. On the other hand, if we adopt the simple expedient of having fewer but larger electoral districts, each returning three representatives or more; if we give to each voter as many votes as there are members to be returned; and if we permit him either to distribute his votes among several candidates, or to concentrate them on one, as he pleases; then, while a large majority can return two representatives, a minority of two-fifths is strong enough to return one. This, though far from being the exclusive, is the most typical formula by which "Proportionate Representa-

tion" can be expressed. Beyond this it is better here not to go ; more subtle questions belong to the perfection, not to the principle, of Proportionate Representation.

A very low franchise, taken by itself, obviously threatens the practical disfranchisement of whole classes and vast national interests ; but it need not be taken by itself. It admits and demands various compensations and modifications. A share in the franchise is not by necessity an equal share. Voters possessing larger intelligence than others, or larger property, and remoter as well as larger interests in the national wellbeing, might be endowed with a double vote ; or a second franchise, restricted however to the election of a limited number of representatives, might be created for the protection of interests otherwise unrepresented. Several checks and compensations formed a part of the original Reform Bill of 1867. They were rejected ; and the greater is therefore now the need of such a distribution of seats as aims at giving security alike to the propertied and unpropertied classes. Such a course is an advance in civilisation ; it is a supplement demanded by measures recently passed, and which cannot be recalled.

Neither the authentic "Idea" of National Representation, nor its true dignity, is understood by those who assert that men discontented by a mere majority representation are labouring under a sentimental grievance. The injury is not chiefly that done to individuals, or to the local minority, which, even when nearly equal to the majority in numbers, and more

numerous than the total electors of several represented towns, constantly finds itself amerced of all part in the making of those laws which yet it is bound to obey. The chief injury is the one inflicted on the nation itself, whose collective interests are postponed, as they were in the days of "Protection," to the supposed interests of a section of the nation. It is the old monopoly again, but in a form as yet not commonly detected ; for what does mere majority representation mean but that majorities, strong enough in themselves, are artificially protected from the frank competition of minorities, the latter being often downtrodden and misshapen while their growth is still immature ?

The "Public Opinion," even of a whole community, is itself often but a passing thing, self-corrected on mature reflection, as is shown by the "public opinion" of England during the days of "The Ecclesiastical Titles Bill," and of the late Civil War in America. What, then, is to be hoped for if the rule of a mere majority among electors is preferred to that of the whole body, that majority itself often consisting mainly of the least educated ? What the disfranchised minorities demand is not equality of power, but equality of treatment, a free stage and no favour. What they ask from their country is not the indulgence often given to the weak, but a common right to serve her so far as their humble, but not inconsiderable, powers permit. The answer of those in possession is, "If you want power, make yourselves a majority !" This is a rough and ready admonition to make bricks

without straw. A minority is first interdicted the ordinary means of growth, and then admonished to grow. The food that stimulates growth is reasonable hope; and hope is stifled when the best exertion meets no proportional reward. In the most arduous careers men advance by degrees, because effort is not in vain. With hope men are strengthened by trial; in the absence of hope they remain inert. A zealous, patriotic citizen not only desires to see his country prosper, but also aspires himself to win for her advantages especially appreciated by him, and to avert from her particular forms of evil not brought within the cognisance of all. Deride such aspirations, and you freeze that life-blood which would have gladly poured itself forth for king and country. A minority the exertions of which are not rewarded within just degrees either becomes extinct, or lives on not to work but to sulk; while the party that boasts its victory degenerates into a triumphant faction. To treat men with contumely because they are less strong than ourselves, is a violation both of good morals and good manners, which neither an individual nor a nation can afford.

But, as has been already remarked, it is the nation itself that suffers most from the wrong, and this consideration brings us to the heart of the matter. The reason that many miss this truth is because they are still intellectually running in the rut of past times, and have not risen to the full conception of that *actual* as distinguished from *virtual* representation of which, notwithstanding, they make their boast. In

old times the representation of the country in the House of Commons, while nominally an actual, was in reality chiefly a virtual representation, such as it remains in the House of Lords, largely, though not exclusively. During the last century the House of Commons consisted in the main of England's country gentlemen: it virtually represented the landed proprietors, farmers, and labourers, and the old constitutional traditions; while the popular power, though partially represented in it also, was, for the most part, not directly represented, remaining a passive thing, yet one of great importance because it included a latent, active force, sure to become patent under the stimulus of a sentiment that strongly appealed to all. Virtual and actual representation are capable of working admirably in conjunction; but when a country ceases to be contented with virtual representation in its popular House it must go on to a real, and not a pretended, direct representation,—one that represents it intellectually and morally, not merely physically and numerically; one that represents its many classes, interests, and opinions, as generated both by historical and local circumstance, and that consequently must represent its local minorities, which, though they bear the common name of minority, are yet essentially different things in the different parts of the country, and make a wholly different contribution to the parliamentary stock of knowledge and judgment. Virtual representation is good in its place, and direct representation is good; but fictitious representation is bad.

A country may, at different periods of its existence, be guided by a single man who is recognised by all as their virtual representative ; or by a senate consisting of those regarded as its representative men ; or, again, by such a direct representation of the whole country as presents, in its Parliament, a true and, as far as may be, a complete image of that country. Under all these changes, which commonly accompany a nation's development, there is one thing that remains unchanged. At one period the nation believes in the wisdom of some one great chief or king, at another of some historical order, and later in that of the people taken collectively ; but at all those different periods alike it knows that a nation must be governed by wisdom, and not by mere will. So long as the wisdom recognised as a nation's guide is that of a particular order regarded as pre-eminently well informed, conspicuously responsible, and profoundly interested in the permanent wellbeing of the whole community, so long a clumsy method of testing the opinions of the country taken as a whole—opinions intended less to initiate a political course than to add to it a new sanction—is found sufficient ; and such a method is mere majority representation : but when a nation deliberately elects to be self-governed, which few nations do prematurely unless they are artificially stimulated, it is bound to ascertain, with a scientific accuracy, if it can, and at the least with a conscientious solicitude, what it inwardly believes respecting the true and the right, the authentic claims and the per-

manent interests of all. Whether the constitution be monarchical, aristocratical, or popular, or all three blended—the especial merit attributed to our own by the chief foreign political writers—to teach that Will apart from Wisdom has a right to govern, or can govern aright, is to teach a moral and political heresy ; and the nation which gives ear to such teaching only “makes its rounds,” and returns, through a false civilisation, to barbarism.

Let us apply these principles to Proportionate Representation. A self-governed nation has undertaken to be directed by its own wisdom ; and the wisdom of a nation is Public Opinion rightly formed and justly estimated. But if the philosophic schools may err, much more may a nation, which has violent passions, much to delude it, and habits rather practical than reflective. How, then, is a genuine Public Opinion, as distinguished from a counterfeit one, to be formed ?

A genuine Public Opinion, which alone should claim the name, is a rarer thing than many imagine ; and there are countries in which it cannot exist. It is dissipated by the fervours of faction, and frozen by timidity and selfishness. The formation of a true Public Opinion resembles the process of crystallisation, which takes place perfectly in proportion as it takes place without disturbance, and by the gradual operation of its own interior law ; the minute particles held in solution settling down into the definite form, hexagonal, or more many-sided, according to the

crystal's special type. Public Opinion consists of numberless individual opinions, attracting each other, blended, but not merged ; each of which must therefore at once possess the independence of real and free thought, and unite it with that moderation, charity, and reverence through which real and free thought willingly submits to conscientious modifications, resisting only the incompatible and the arbitrary, until at last there arises that harmony in which many minds become one.

If this estimate of Public Opinion be just, that singular attribute of a wise people is not formed by loud harangues, partisan clamours, unscrupulous electioneering contrivances, anonymous newspaper paragraphs too often calculated only to deepen old prejudices or inflame sudden passions, and least of all by mob processions, with banner and brass band, the omens of that time when Liberty, in place of being the "grave mother of majestic works," is forced, after many a discreditable adventure, to put on motley attire, and take her place in pantomime. As little is it formed by depriving a nation's scattered minorities of political citizenship, exalting its scattered majorities into local despotisms, flinging these *dissecta membra* into a Medea's cauldron, and, after they have been well boiled down together, lifting thence a renovated Parliament as vivacious as old Egeus in his renewed youth. The formation of a true Public Opinion is neither a convulsive, a mechanical, nor a magical process. It is not a sprite "dancing in the air," nor

a more fleshly apparition rising from below and vanishing in mist—

“ The earth hath bubbles as the water has,
And these are of them.”

It is not the resultant of fierce antagonisms made fiercer by insolent methods of public procedure preferred to the considerate and the courteous by enthusiasts bent upon doing a nation's work rapidly rather than on doing it well. The passions engendered by wrong are inconsistent with serious thought, and the numberless fictitious “public opinions” refuse to coalesce and become a real one. In other words, the multiplication of exaggerated local triumphs and of unmerited defeats deprives a people of the virtuous use of its political faculties, and substitutes for the unity of a true national existence a Babel of social sects and warring interests, to the destruction, eventually, of all solid patriotism. A nation thus maimed is rendered unfit both for the grave trials and the magnificent prospects which lie before modern civilisation. How high a Christian nation might rise above what has hitherto been known of national greatness, if it were as zealous to discharge its duties as to claim its rights, it is hard to say ; but we have too many examples to show us how low it may fall when counterfeit freedom, counterfeit equality, and counterfeit greatness are substituted for the realities, and walk in the train of a counterfeit national representation.

We perceive thus at once the fallacy of that plea so constantly urged by the apologists for mere majority

representation, viz. "the minority in one district is the majority in another, and in Parliament they balance each other." The question is not primarily one as to the balance of forces in Parliament. It is as to whether the nation has so developed Public Opinion throughout her wide domain, and so adjusted the intellectual resources thus placed at her disposal, as to enjoy within the walls of Parliament the full contributions which she ought to have drawn directly from those whom she deems fit to be electors, and, indirectly, from all for whose weal she is bound to consult. Even on the assumption that Public Opinion has been duly formed though not represented, in the various electoral districts, and, again, that the minority in one district is the majority in another, so far as the war of parties is concerned, it does not follow that any corresponding compensation takes place as regards political opinion outside the ring of mere party contests. The minority in one district and the majority in another may be in harmony so far as adhesion or opposition to a particular political party goes, and yet the most intimate conviction and ardent aspiration of the one may be wholly unshared by the other. The one may be zealous for religious education, the other for secular; the one may approve of intervention and the other of non-intervention. Consequently as regards convictions cherished by large bodies, and yet left unrepresented, the supposed compensation afforded to minorities is imaginary. Add to this that, except where two parties are nearly balanced, that supposed compen-

sation cannot exist even as regards the balance of party forces in Parliament. Catholic Emancipation, Negro Emancipation, Parliamentary Reform, Commercial Freedom,—these great measures had met with considerable support from the thoughtful for many a year before they were passed into law. What caused a delay, in some cases so full of mischief? The circumstance that in districts where the party supporting those reforms lacked a majority, the minorities favourable to it were unrepresented. The game of party politics was played merrily enough, but the wound that went on festering in the breast of the nation has never been healed. Mere majority representation unites two evils of an opposite character. During inert periods it resists the passing of just measures until the reform ceases to carry with it a healing efficacy: at periods of excitement it will not tolerate even those brief constitutional delays without which a nation cannot distinguish between its deeper convictions and its superficial theories or passions; and thus for reform it substitutes revolution.

National representation, then, when contemplated in the light of an idea, means the proportionate representation both of a nation's majorities and larger minorities throughout the whole country, not chiefly to adjust the relations of parliamentary parties, but for the purpose of eliciting the intelligence and maturing the wisdom of a nation. If men do not see this, it is because they do not contemplate the nation itself in the light of an idea: if they recognised its majesty

they would at once be delivered from all temptation to worship that idol of political materialists—a majority. What is a Nation? It is not, like a handful of sand, merely an *aggregate* of the individual grains which compose it. It is an organic growth the life of which is in the whole. It is a body the larger portion of which is subordinate to the nobler, the heart and the head. It is a hierarchy of high powers which only continue to live because they are ranged, one beneath another, in just subordination. The several atoms which compose that body derive from it, not their strength only, but their sequent existence. Separated from it, their fate would be “to lie in cold obstruction and to rot;” and their noblest heritage is the obedience they owe to it as a whole, and not to any mere portion of it, whether the major or the minor part, taken apart from that whole. So long as the individual members of a Nation recognise their duties to it, so long does the Nation recognise its duties to them all, and claim to be the servant of each. To it the humblest individual member is an object of reverence. The Nation, indeed, is but the expansion of the individual, a larger mirror reflecting his latent greatness. It exists for him; and though its authority is not derived from him, yet it is bound both to promote his spiritual interests and take charge of those that are but physical. The obligation is mutual; the loyalty is reciprocal; and the dignity of the Nation is enhanced, not abated, when it acknowledges the duty which it owes to its members, even when but a

minority. On the other hand, a mere majority is, *as such*, but a material thing : if by an act of self-will, and without a moral necessity, it revolts against the organic body, that body continues to be the Nation, even when numerically a minority, and the revolted majority is but a populace, not a people. It follows that servile deference to a mere majority, as if it possessed a virtue *inherent in itself*, and could claim to be the representative of the Nation beyond the limits assigned to its power by the national constitution, is simply the worship of material force. When a Nation far advanced in civilisation discovers that its maturer intelligence can no longer be adequately expressed by adding up a mere sum-total of local majorities—just as the thought of the man cannot be interpreted by the babble of the child—and finds that it needs a finer organ of expression, one that includes proportionately the voice of important minorities, it is *bound* imperatively to select that, the more exact form of expression ; and the local majorities are bound not only to accept that choice but to rejoice in it. They are disloyal to the nation which they affect to represent unless they desire that her deliberate and conscientious will, ascertained in the most exact manner, should prevail. The wrong done to the local minority, when deliberately left unrepresented, is a twofold wrong : it is the expansion of that injury inflicted on the sacred right of each individual, thus amerced of a right conferred on him by his country : it is also the image in miniature of the injury done to the total country in which that conscien-

tious public opinion, which ought to have grown up and become the nation's guide, is murdered before its birth.

It is thus that Edmund Burke speaks respecting that will of a majority—

“In a state of *rude* nature there is no such thing as a People. A number of men in themselves have no collective capacity. The idea of a People is the idea of a corporation. . . . We are so little affected by things which are habitual, that we consider this idea of the decision of a *majority*, as if it were a law of our original nature; but such constructive whole, residing in a part only, is one of the most violent fictions of positive law that ever has been, or can be, made on the principles of artificial incorporation. Out of civil society nature knows nothing of it. . . . In the abstract, it is perfectly clear, that out of a state of civil society, majority and minority are relations which can have no existence; and that, in civil society, its own specific conventions in each corporation determine what it is that constitutes the people, so as to make their act the signification of the general will. . . . I see as little of policy or utility as there is of right in laying down a principle that a majority of men told by the head are to be considered as the people, and that as such their will is to be law.”

To the omnipotence of a mere majority he opposes the high and special qualifications, both for counsel and rule, often bestowed, not by privilege, but by *nature*, on a minority; and on them bestowed, not for their own advantage, but for the behoof of the whole nation. Again he shows how, in various countries, for various functions, political or judicial, the power of decision has been confided, not to a simple majority, as if a magic charm resided in the word, but sometimes to a larger, sometimes to a smaller majority, and sometimes to a selected minority. A majority is not a principle, but one of many modes for realising the

true principle, viz. National Representation. He sums up thus: "Neither the few nor the many have a right to act merely by their will, in any matter connected with duty, trust, engagement, or obligation."

To deny that numbers alone are to rule is not to affirm that civil position and privilege alone are to rule; the qualifications to rule wisely and justly are essentially moral qualifications demanded and imparted by nature, and recognised, not created by, convention. So long as the qualities which naturally lead to eminence survive in sequent generations of men placed high, their claims to power, though not to exclusive power, survive also, because their powers to serve the nation survive. If these powers exist no longer, the order which had once possessed them deservedly falls; and nature supplies its place, but not by substituting the mere rule of numbers for that of intellectual and moral power. Let us listen once more to Burke. He speaks of the qualifications for liberty: from these may be inferred the qualifications for the exercise of political power in a country that possesses liberty, and is resolved to transmit the gift.

"Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites; in proportion as their love to justice is above their rapacity; in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption; in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves. Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without.

It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters."

If they cannot be free, much less are they fit to be trusted with preponderant, and least of all with illimitable, political power in a free country. It was not in contempt of the poor, but in their defence, that that great political philosopher, if possible even more eminent for his passionate love of justice, and hatred of injustice, than for his wisdom, thus rebuked the ethical heresies which in his later years threatened with destruction "that glorious work of time and providence," the constitution of England; while, triumphant in France, they wrote in blood on the bosom of that once noble and religious country, the sentence of her condemnation and of her shame. In this high philosophy there was nothing one-sided. Burke knew what the real claims of the poor are. For that reason he knew what they are not, and he denounced those who when they demanded bread gave them a stone. They have a high political function, but it is not that of predominant rule, however their numbers may predominate.

"The most poor, illiterate, and uninformed creatures upon earth are judges of a *practical* oppression. It is a matter of feeling; and as such persons generally have felt most of it, and are not of an over-lively sensibility, they are the best judges of it. But for the *real cause or the appropriate remedy*, they ought never to be called into council about the one or the other . . . because their reason is weak; because, when once roused, their passions are ungoverned; because they want information; because the smallness of the property which individually they

possess, renders them less attentive to the consequence of the measures they adopt in affairs of moment."¹

Elsewhere he shows that such statements do not deny that the masses have a momentous civil office, but, on the contrary, indicate in what it consists.

"It is not necessary to teach men to thirst after power. But it is very expedient that by moral instruction they should be taught, and *by their civil constitutions they should be compelled*, to put many restrictions upon the immoderate use of it, and the inordinate desire. . . . He (the 'true Statesman') thinks of the place in which political power is to be lodged with no other attention than as it may render the more or the less practicable its salutary restraint, and its prudent direction. For this reason, no legislator, at any period of the world, has willingly placed the seat of *active* power in the hands of the multitude; because there it admits of no control, no regulation, no steady direction whatever. *The people are the natural control on authority: but to exercise and control it together, is contradictory and impossible.*"²

To the same effect Coleridge speaks. The people are, he says, the very life-blood of the body politic; but in health that life-blood manifests itself by the glow of life and strength in the cheek: if it flows over in a stream it is because a wound has been inflicted.

It may appear to some that the principles here advocated imply an exclusive admiration for aristocratic and a narrow prejudice against democratic institutions. What they really imply is a preference for the English Constitution, the boast of which has so long been that it alone combines the three great elements of power, monarchical, aristocratical, and

¹ Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe.

² *Appeal from the New Whigs to the Old Whigs*, p. 203.

popular, to a constitution founded on the popular element by itself. This is a preference which, at least till lately, the two great historical parties of England, the Tory and the Whig, have shared, as men still share a belief that the acephalous and non-vertebrated animal structures are inferior to those which include a head and a spine. But, if England should ever adopt purely democratic institutions, it will become immeasurably not less but more necessary that her representative system should represent the whole community and not merely a sum-total of local majorities. In an admirable pamphlet,¹ published when the household franchise was conceded to boroughs, Mr. James Garth Marshall, a man whose whole heart was with the people, and who loved them too well to pander to popular passions, thus distinguishes between two opposite things which are often called by the same name—

“Let us first think what we mean by the term democracy, for there may be two very different kinds of democracy—the one just and noble, the fruit of which is true freedom and equitable laws; the other unjust and degrading, which is destructive to true liberty, and which leads either to anarchy and confusion, or else to tyranny and despotism. The main principle of a just and beneficent democracy, with parliamentary government, is this—that the opinions and interests of all classes of society, in all parts of the country, should be fully and equitably represented in Parliament; and that any party who at any time possess overbalancing power, because they form a majority of the whole, should exercise their power with moderation, and as a trust for the public good, not for their own exclusive advantage. To stamp our democracy with the char-

¹ *The New Franchise; How to Use it. An Address to the Working Men of Leeds.* By James Garth Marshall. 1867.

acter of this higher principle it is of the first necessity that in all contests between opposite political parties, especially in contested elections, a spirit of honourable fair play should be observed. . . . I believe nothing would prove more effective in promoting the spirit of *fair dealing* between political parties than the measure now adopted by Parliament for giving, in large constituencies having three members, a fair proportionate weight to any party that may be in a minority. By the new Reform Bill it is enacted that in these constituencies no elector shall vote for more than two out of three members ; *a minority of two-fifths would, if they voted together, be able to secure one of the three members.* If the minority were less than two-fifths, the majority, by distributing their votes, would return all the three members. I think the cumulative vote would have been a more complete and satisfactory arrangement ; the plan, however, of the present Bill secures substantial justice, and a true representation of the whole constituency, not of the majority merely.

“ The expression ‘ cumulative vote ’ means a system of voting where each elector in a constituency having as many votes as there are representatives to be elected in his county or borough, and distributing his votes as he pleases, may at his option give one vote to each candidate, or accumulate the whole number of his votes in favour of one candidate.” . . . (p. 13).¹ It is therefore desirable that, to give the fullest development to the advantages of the cumulative vote, there should be not less than three representatives to each constituency (p. 22).

When, some eighteen years ago, such men as Mr. J. G. Marshall, John Mill, Mr. Fawcett, Mr. Hare, and others, wrote on “ Proportionate Representation,” the subject was discussed with more reference to philosophical considerations and less to party interests than it has recently been. In the years referred to the question was treated as one not only of political, but of great moral significance. Thus Mr. Marshall remarked : “ It is when one party, under the

¹ *Minorities and Majorities : their Relative Rights.* By J. G. Marshall. Ridgway.

present system of voting, feel themselves at an unjust disadvantage, that they are driven to various violent and immoral expedients to maintain their position ; to bribery, intimidation, and the raking up of class animosities." This is most true ; and from this it follows that, if "Proportionate Representation" had been adopted in time, there would have been neither need nor pretext for the ballot, that cowardly procedure, through which men are to be protected from the consequences of discharging their political duties, not by laws punishing intimidation, direct or indirect as they should be, but by the use of a mask when they vote, and by lying if interrogated. At that time democracy had serious moral and patriotic aspirations. It was before the days of the Caucus.

"Let us not be outstripped by our cousins across the Atlantic in the endeavour to realise this great improvement. Let us prove ourselves worthy of the new grand onward movement of democracy in our own England, the nursing mother of free institutions. Do not let democracy be amongst us degraded by narrow party or class prejudices. . . . This is the glorious history and tradition which has come down to us, and which it is our duty to maintain. . . . An Englishman will strike down his opponent, but scorns to trample on him when down.¹ . . . There is much to favour the establishment, in far greater power and influence than it has yet attained, of a *true and beneficent democracy* in England ; I do not mean as hostile to our monarchic and aristocratic institutions, but as *combining with these in new forms, and giving them a new motive force*. For these three principles, far from being necessarily opposed to each other, are, on the contrary, by the very nature of human society, indispensable to each other. A democracy without fit organisation is a rope of sand ; is no more able to direct and take

¹ *Minorities and Majorities : their Relative Rights.*

care of itself than a herd of wild buffaloes wandering over an American prairie, and liable at any moment to rush off into a headlong stampede, they know not why and care not whither. Brains, and not numbers, do in fact rule the world in the long run, wherever there is any rule or order at all."

The warning with which he ends is even more a moral than a political warning: "Let them avoid, as they would shun a certain shipwreck, the danger of being tempted by the possession of new and great power to use that power for unjust or selfish objects, the danger of setting up *the mere arbitrary will of a majority*, however small and fluctuating, as the supreme law."

This danger is one rendered much more formidable by the degree in which the mechanism of irregular political strategy has recently learned to blend together a thousand discordant wills, and thus impart to them "all ambition's singleness of aim." Formerly the power of mere numbers was limited by its own incoherency and self-contradictions. The science of modern agitation has flashed an intelligence—not an intelligence from above—into the restless mass, but done so without communicating to it a moral purpose. The exclusive rule of a mere majority is a bad thing because it is the rule of a force comparatively material: still worse is the rule of a majority representing not the various classes and conditions of a nation, but mainly a single interest and a single instinct; but worst of all is the rule of a mere majority wielded by a small, irresponsible, perhaps invisible, body of agitators. A nation which evokes such a power,

creates like Frankenstein, as Canning affirmed, a Political Monster whose earliest impulse must ever be to hunt its creator to death.

The quotations made above from Burke, and from those writings of his later years, elicited by the French Revolution which threw him chiefly upon the conservative side of a many-sided intellect, might have been expected to exhibit a striking contrast to quotations from modern writers ardently devoted to the cause of progress. Notwithstanding, many of these later extracts have not a little analogy with those taken from Burke. It would be easy to add very largely to their number, while quoting only from writers whose opinions belong to those of the "advanced school." Thus John Mill said—

"The natural tendency of representative government, as of modern civilisation, is toward collective mediocrity; and this tendency is increased by all reductions and extensions of the franchise, their effect being to place the principal power in the hands of classes more and more below the highest level of instruction in the community. But, though the superior intellects and characters will necessarily be outnumbered, it makes a great difference whether or not they are heard. In the false democracy which, instead of giving representation to all, gives it only to the local majorities, the voice of the instructed minority may have no organs at all in the representative body. . . . The great difficulty of democratic government has hitherto seemed to be how to provide, in a democratic society, what circumstances have provided hitherto in all the societies which have maintained themselves ahead of others—a social support, a *point d'appui* for individual resistance to the tendencies of the ruling power, a protection, a rallying-point for opinions and interests which the ascendant public opinion views with disfavour. For want of such a *point d'appui* the older societies, and all but a few modern ones, either fell into dissolution or became stationary (which means slow deterioration), through the exclusive pre-

dominance of a part only of the conditions of social and mental wellbeing. . . . The only quarter in which to look for a supplement, or completing corrective to the instincts of a democratic majority, is the instructed minority; but in the ordinary mode of constituting democracy, this minority has no organ."

Mr. Buxton thus justified his advocacy of Proportionate Representation in 1867—

"It seemed to him that, valuable as the other results would be of the adoption of the proposed arrangement, no one of them would be of greater importance than this: that it would call forth so much political vigour and life in the constituencies to which it was applied. . . . It would be invidious to do so, otherwise he could easily remind the House of many boroughs and many counties in which utter apathy and stagnation had actually resulted from the feeling of the minority that any exertion of theirs must be vain."

Such statements strikingly show how much there is in common between very different schools of thought, when each is at its best—that is, when each has derived its principles from sincere philosophic and ethical reflection, not from the passions or necessities of party. A Conservative and a Popular political philosophy, however they may differ in detail, are seldom wholly antagonistic, if grounded on real thought, except when each turns out its worst side upon the other. Under the influence of pride or interest mere dead "castes," grounded on accident, or injustice, yet separated from other classes by impassable barriers, may take the place of those living orders and degrees which sustain the life of a nation; and an intelligence spellbound by its devotion to old traditions may waste its energies in endeavours to

prolong decay, and keep above ground what would be better beneath it; but it is quite as true that there is a spurious progress, the very opposite of a genuine one, and that the most ardent zealots for popular liberties may render it impossible for them either to achieve permanence or to deserve it. Principles which are thus held in common by the best representatives of political systems in many respects at variance, possess an extraordinary claim on our attention.

In Burke's time Proportionate Representation was an idea which had not yet risen above the political horizon; yet its aurora was obviously watched for by a philosophy which saw so plainly at once the true greatness of a nation, and the counterfeit greatness of a majority. The same spot may be reached from very different directions, and those who have held many great principles in common, while opposed on not a few political questions of the day, may easily, under changed circumstances, arrive at nearly the same conclusions. Assuming that a nation, long dependent for its political guidance upon its most highly educated order, an order identified by history with the noblest traditions of that nation, and by property with its gravest interests in the present and the future, had at last come to the conclusion that the time for such tutelage had ceased, and had claimed at once the rights and duties of political manhood, through the establishment of a very extended franchise—such an experiment, upon the principles of Burke, whether or

not a wise one, might well be regarded as the expression of a generous aspiration, not of an ignorant arrogance, and as one which need involve, if undertaken in a righteous spirit, no dangers except those which a manly prudence converts into a "glorious gain." But on the principles of Burke, as well as on those of the best "advanced thinkers" in our own day, the righteous spirit and the manly prudence would not have sustained the claim to exclusive power on the part of the majority. It would have demanded the repudiation of any such claim. On the principles alike of Burke and of a philosophical democrat, a nation thus acting for itself in its collective capacity, giving an account to none, stirring up its strength when it wills, and committing itself to courses which, if erroneous, may admit of no retrieval, is pre-eminently bound to ascertain that its Parliament at least represents the total judgment of the nation impartially collected, diligently sifted and justly applied: it must rebuke whatever might taint its deliberations with passion or pride; it must repel whatever sophisticates patriotic thought by overweening class-interests, and whatever discourages the conscientious growth and free expression of opinions at the moment unpopular; and it must ban all those illicit modes of political action which give dominion over the nation itself to a reckless minority, like that minority of less than one-tenth in Paris which created the "Reign of Terror" during the French Revolution. Finally, it need hardly be said that, on the principles alike of

true Conservatism or true Democracy, powers so tremendous can never be conscientiously granted, on any pretext, to those who have not learned their duties as subjects and citizens. Such persons—more sinned against than sinning—are necessitated to abuse the powers thus prematurely conferred upon them to their own destruction and that of their country.

Once more, on the principles alike of Burke and of our "philosophical Radicals," if a nation ventured on a great constitutional change, and if that change was intended to be permanent, it would be necessary to effect it in such a manner as to allow the new institutions created to work amicably with the old institutions retained. Thus, unless we desire a revolution as well as a great political development, the House of Lords and the newly constituted House of Commons should be capable of working in harmony. The House of Lords, though it includes the most distinguished members of the professions, the Army and the Navy, the Church and the Bar, as well as many eminent men of letters, and statesmen whose training was in the House of Commons, and thus far must be considered a directly representative body though not an elective one, is yet also a *virtually* representative assembly, and as such represents much in the present which is most unobtrusively and disinterestedly helpful to England, and much besides by which the past still ministers to the present and the future. Now that the House of Commons is elected by Household Suffrage, it is obviously not impossible that the rela-

tions between the two legislative bodies may often be strained. How is such a contingency to be met? We know well enough how it would be met by a country as impulsive, and as fanatically inexorable in the character of its political logic, as France is. But England is a deliberate, not an impulsive country, and in its political movements it has more belief in the judicious than in the merely and dryly logical. It would think twice before it seriously tampered with an assembly to which its liberties have owed so much in past ages—an assembly such as no other country in the world possesses or could create. In matters of detail that House of course might be modified; but to alter it essentially would be to destroy it, and thus to impoverish the English Constitution by eliminating from it an element necessary in itself and necessary also as a balance to other elements. As little could the House of Commons be now altered essentially—that is, by the narrowing of the franchise recently so much enlarged. But it, too, might, in matters of detail, be modified, as well as the House of Lords, if experience should prove that such modification was needful. It is not by any means philosophical to assume that such modification may not, in calmer days than these, be reached through the principle of Proportionate Representation. Such a modification might not improbably recommend itself on very various grounds to very different persons, after a mature experience. The characteristic tendencies attributed to Proportionate Representation, equally

by its Conservative and its Democratic advocates, suggest such an anticipation. Both classes affirm that its effects must be to represent, not numbers only, but the different classes and varied interests of the community, as well as the more permanent of its diversified political opinions. They point to the circumstance that it must admit to Parliament men of high and known ability and of exceptional experience, who lack the pecuniary means, the connections, the strength, and the popular qualities which recommend men to large majorities—thus including among the gifts bestowed by popular institutes, the benefits, without the defects, once derived from such boroughs as introduced into Parliament not a few of England's most eminent public servants. By others, members of opposed parties, Proportionate Representation is urged on us because through it alone continuity of national policy is rendered possible. Without it, they truly remark, our legislation is spasmodic and full of fierce alternations and reactions. In one Parliament there is an overwhelming majority at one side, in the next at the other side, both alike misrepresenting the general mind of the nation, exaggerating its most transient impulses, and not seldom at variance with the actual majority in the country at large.

“Give us,” others say, “in the interests of Democracy itself, not whatever her zealots or her parasites may claim for her, but that which is needed to enable her to encounter those trials which no form of government can elude. Give us not only what will strengthen

her hands, but what will provide her energies with a balance and a regulator. Give us what will raise the masses, not pull down those who have won for themselves, or honourably preserved as their inheritance, the natural rewards of superior intellect, courage, and perseverance—rewards, however, which ought to be open to all. Improve the condition of those who still remain on the lowest step of the social ladder, and remove all obstacles from those whom nature has qualified to rise to the highest. Give us a parliamentary system which will not set class against class, but which will prove the perpetual educator of a people.”

Few nations have ever had such great opportunities as England now possesses for the formation of that true public opinion, which can alone prevent a democracy from becoming that false democracy deprecated alike by wise men of all parties ; for she has a strong natural sense of justice, the best help to just thinking, and also the gift of slow, persistent thought, which alone makes its way to steadfast conclusions. She has the moral courage which enables a man to hold fast by what he has learned of truth, and therefore to add it to his country's common stock ; and she has not the vivid impulses that incessantly break the slender tendrils of growing thought, or the hysterical excitabilities that make a man lose his individuality amid the clamour of the crowd. What at present too often impedes her exercise of these characteristic qualifications in the political sphere is chiefly the party violence natural to a country the government of

which is party government. The antidote to this evil is to be found only in the upgrowth of a true and moderate Public Opinion, which must needs uplift the whole soul of the nation till it becomes fit for the highest attainable degree of liberty in union with order and with law. Proportionate Representation, in favouring such a growth and teaching each man to *respect* "his neighbour as himself," sides with all the best that England has inherited or acquired, and furnishes a protection against the chief dangers that threaten her from within and from without. It harmonises with the interior gifts by nature hers, already referred to, and not less with the external gifts bequeathed to her by a heroic past. England, which has been the mother of parliaments, should be the first country to show to the world the example of a true parliament—that undistorting mirror which reflects the image, not falsified, and yet ennobled, of a just, wise, and valiant nation. Whether at an earlier or later period—for these remarks do not apply exclusively to the present time—this should be the privilege of England. She has been making various political experiments of late; and experimental philosophy does not hastily make its boast of finality. It "lives and learns," preserving what is sound in all that it has built up by introducing into the social fabric whatever a maturer experience proves to be still deficient.

To the present confused state of Ireland it is hardly necessary to refer. It has more to do with her past than many suppose. Irish history, abounding as

it does in the pathetic and the picturesque, was unfavourable to the creation of public opinion, even in its rudiments. The clan system produced everywhere a breathlessly rapid succession of events, but not of the events which leave behind them political experience. These events were all of the same sort, each clan at once resembling its neighbour clan, and waging war against it. The clan system fostered a passionate loyalty both to ancient chiefs and to ancient laws, and as passionate a love of local, though not of individual, independence: it produced ardent affections and fierce antagonisms; heroic self-sacrifice and barbaric vindictiveness. It developed high domestic virtues, and much of moral, though not conventional refinement; and, under fortunate circumstances, favouring, as it did, the conventual life, it stimulated a spiritual intensity which once rendered Ireland the land of saints, and might have rendered her such again in this her later day; but it left neither provision nor demand for industry, prudence, or the other political qualities which build up states; and of course it did not bequeath the materials out of which Public Opinion, a great but somewhat prosaic thing, shapes itself.

Later times have, in that respect, been nearly as unfavourable to Ireland. The penal laws crushed out the seeds of Public Opinion. Life itself seemed but an untoward accident. It left place for careful broodings, and for gusts of careless gaiety; but serious reflection did not seem worth while. The movement which

won Catholic Emancipation, the noblest and most unsullied popular movement exhibited by any people in modern times, had little to do with Public *Opinion*, though much with public sentiment in its highest form, that which blends religious aspiration with the true and wise patriotism in which neither vanity nor greed has a part. One strong man, Mr. O'Connell, thought for all Ireland. He put his brain into a people's heart, and thus, while giving unity to a people's action, superseded rather than elicited individual thought. What he needed was a single and a vehement popular response; and when, under the influence of the "Young Ireland" party, a sudden and semi-organised Public Opinion began to manifest itself in strange, spasmodic movements, the apparition thus rudely extemporised proved incapable of coalescing with a system founded on the will of one great man, and must either have speedily destroyed that system or been destroyed by it. The attempted revolt of 1848, into which its authors rather blundered than entered deliberately, prolonged for nearly a quarter of a century the political system founded on that Sectarian Ascendancy only partially overthrown by Catholic Emancipation, and out of the ruins of which the statesmanship of that day had not the wisdom and the insight, even when it had a serious desire, to extricate itself.

The late Reform Act has given to Ireland, most unhappily for her, a franchise practically much wider than England has been deemed fit to use after a political education of two centuries and a half. That

a political power, resting on what is in Ireland nearly "universal suffrage," should at least be exercised under the sway, at once enlightening and restraining, of a true and not a fictitious Public Opinion—that is, should be exercised with prudence, mutual respect, and righteousness—must be the aspiration of every Irishman who is a lover of his country, not her flatterer, and who recognises any connection between her honour and her interests, or between politics and morals. Political power, however large, is lasting only when those on whom it has been bestowed are competent to use it; and political competence is not communicated to the inexperienced by an "infused knowledge" of politics, but by that moral discipline which respects the rights of the whole community, and not a part of it only, whether a majority or minority. Those who have loved Ireland longest, and with the most appreciative love, have ever cherished the hope that that Apostolic mission which was hers of old, and which is greater than any political or material greatness, was reserved also for her day of freedom, as the highest reward for her fidelity during the centuries of persecution.¹ Such aspirations are too often forgotten amid the storms of modern politics. If they are ever again to have place in Ireland, and to shape her destinies, that political career which lies before her, and which will work her weal or her woe according as it is directed, must advance along the royal road of political virtue, of

¹ To enforce this lesson was the moral aim of my poem "Inisfail."

which a virtuous Public Opinion is an essential part.¹ For her Proportionate Representation is even more necessary than for any other part of the Empire. The alternative is a demoralisation fatal alike to her spiritual and temporal interests.

¹ I regret that it was not till after the present remarks had been written that I saw Mr. Hare's admirable book, the name of which is prefixed to this essay. It is a book of deep thought, expressed in language worthy of that thought. Mr. Hare was one of the first among those who devoted themselves seriously to the great cause of "Proportionate Representation," which probably owes to him more than to any other writer. In his earlier works he had advocated an area for the exercise of the Electoral Franchise, so wide as to meet with disapproval from many of his strongest admirers. Such a scheme had, however, like the "Preferential Vote," no essential connection with the great principle of "Proportionate Representation," and he has happily modified it of late years, in consideration of changed circumstances.

VII

CHURCH PROPERTY & SECULARISATION

[1867. —Republished because still applicable to England.]

THE principle for which I contend is this, that in all Christian countries Church Property is an essential condition of true Christian civilisation. In almost all respects that principle applies as much to England as to Ireland, and in some respects even more so. In dealing with Ireland it means that the Religious Equality should be reached, not by the secularisation of her Church property, but by a just division of it, so far as it still remains, between the Catholics and Protestants; the Catholic portion being administered for religious purposes by a Catholic Board, and the Protestant portion by a Protestant Board.

That course—the course of levelling up, not levelling down—is necessary. If Religious Equality is a sacred principle, it is also a principle that we are not to substitute illusions for realities, or *wantonly* to injure existing interests. But I have shown else-

where¹ that to secularise Church property—whoever might snatch the wreckers' spoil—would give the nation nothing but what it either possessed already, or must soon acquire, without this dishonourable sacrifice.

It is common sense. We have all along complained of a grievance, and this course would remove it. That grievance was the alienation of the Church property. It never consisted in that arrangement which was changed in 1833—the arrangement which imposed the payment of tithe especially on the *tenant*. That was, indeed, the most vexatious way in which tithe could then be collected, and no one would restore it ; but it is the *land* that really pays the tithe, whether the landlord or the tenant be the agent in this transaction ; and the Irish Catholic's wrong consisted in his being defrauded of that spiritual benefit which ought to have accrued to all Irishmen from the tithe paid by the land of Ireland. When a statesman has asked me, "Is there any one thing remaining which we could do for the Irish people and which we have not done?" I have sometimes answered, "If you could only, without inconvenience, take your hand out of the poor man's pocket !" To keep from a man his estate, and thus force upon him a personal expenditure otherwise not necessary, is to plunder him. Distribute Church property aright, and you cancel the wrong. When the wrong is removed, the past will in Ireland, as in Scotland, either be forgotten, or be

¹ *Pleas for Secularisation.*

remembered without bitterness as part of a nation's historical lore. Till then it is the interpreter of our daily life, and part of our *cause*. Till then we remember the Past that we may have a Future.

It is the religious course. It restores to the glory of God and the good of His poor that which was diverted from both. It cancels the bond between patriotism and revenge, and elevates religion to her native seats unvexed by the tempest. It brings the "daily bread" of sacred ministrations and spiritual instruction to the outcast and the wayfarer; and it fortifies the emigrant, or the exile, with that matured and thoughtful *personal* piety which can alone guard him against the temptations of far lands in which truth is not a tradition, nor virtue a social usage, and in which neighbours are not "our outward consciences." Unlike "the voluntary system for all," it knits together, by a common weal, those different classes and interests in Ireland which have been too long at war, and which never will be frozen together by the common woe of a loss sustained in equality. It gives us social peace; and, till a basis is laid for peace, who can tell what calamity may not be in store for us? Some people flatter themselves that in the event of a great catastrophe it is not Ireland that would suffer most. Catastrophes are possible from which, if England lost most because she had most to lose, Ireland would lose most because she would lose her all. The secularisation of Ireland's Church property may sentence all property in both countries.

It is the Catholic course. The Catholic Church is, indeed, not tied to any particular system as regards a provision for religious purposes. She will commonly suffer less from the voluntary system than other communities, even those that have freely chosen it, because her clergy, whether rich or poor, must be profoundly respected by their flocks on account of their sacerdotal character. That character is the root of the reverence paid them ; and the extent of that reverence will ever be proportioned, not to their wealth, but to the fidelity with which they discharge the duties that belong to that character, and the dignity with which they sustain its sacred claims. With Dissenters religion is a matter of individualism, and sometimes, it is to be feared, of intellectual caprice mistaken for Christian liberty. "Private Judgment," on the other hand, in its more stringent forms, is often but a theory or a watchword in the Anglican Church, which claims a *via media* position, has retained a hierarchy, and a ritual in the main ancient, asserts authority though equivocally, and not only affirms a traditional Creed but is itself at least a *national* tradition. It was a natural effect of those sympathies which govern men unconsciously that, in the Dissenting sects, the general law of thought and feeling should determine the special relations between the sect and its ministers. Where the latter claimed no especial reverence it seemed of no vital importance if a straggler were left without their aid. But the Catholic Church can never desire that religious minis-

trations should depend wholly on individual goodwill, much less upon the individual's ability to procure them. They may be most needed by those who appreciate them least ; and it is pre-eminently to the Poor that the Gospel is preached. She has, indeed, had her mendicant orders, which in their place have done a great work ; but their members had renounced *all* worldly things, and *their* position was consistent and complete. There is a strength that belongs to poverty ; and there is also a strength that belongs to moderate resources, honourably secured, and virtuously used : and in her amplitude both kinds of strength are united. The converse holds equally true. There is a weakness which proceeds from excessive endowments ; and there is a weakness which proceeds from the voluntary system ;—these two are not by necessity disunited, and the faults of communities not endowed have sometimes been especially those of old establishments. The voluntary system may be necessary at a particular moment ; but it neither precludes the dangers of wealth nor those of poverty. The Church has ever condemned the error which substitutes a merely individual for a national confession of Religion, and did so especially in the case of La Mennais, the most formidable modern assertor of eloquent error.

Still less has the system of State pensions ever been congenial to her. Distrust most commonly arises from having trusted too much, and an unboastful independence is the true preservative against it. The Church does not naturally or willingly look on the

State with suspicion, and she makes large allowance for a State's jealousies respecting her. She bears to it a true, though not servile reverence. Like her it has both rights and faculties which could inhere in no mere association of individuals, apart from that interior *communion* which gives them their political life. Like her, it is at once beneficent and exacting—securing the meanest from danger, anticipating the needs of the careless, crowning the lowliest with the highest gifts, but also imposing on the loftiest head the weight which steadies it, and binding each man with the restraint which is his safety. It too has its drag-chain as well as its wheels of progress, and is, therefore, often reviled by those whom it protects. The Church sympathises with greatness in all its authentic forms. But it does not become her to be dependent on the State. For her, and for it, an unworthy dependence has consequences worse, in the long run, than those which result from her being outlawed by the State, or even proscribed by it. The ecclesiastical condition alike of France and of Ireland is abnormal religiously, and unsatisfactory civilly. It is a thing remarkable, and to England honourable, that while the revolutionary or the imperial spirit (mutual enemies, but akin not less) have swept religious endowments successively from so many parts of Catholic Europe, they still subsist in England and in Ireland, though in Ireland too long alienated from their proper end. How is this circumstance to be accounted for? Thus:—The English Constitution has been progress-

ive ; but it has been conservative also. It has retained many of the institutions derived from Catholic ages and ancient principles, though lost elsewhere. That it has done so seems a confirmation so far of a theory affirmed by many learned Anglican divines, viz. that neither the English nation, nor the English Church, set itself by deliberate purpose in antagonism to their ancestral Faith.

Church property is no isolated thing. From the first the principle on which it rests has been the precondition of all true civilisation. It is a Civilisation, not an Institute, that is at stake. One of the greatest modern philosophers has made this fact the foundation of his political teaching. Coleridge asserts that the sacred Reserve, divinely sanctioned in the Hebrew commonwealth, was an institution substantially common to all the nobler races. He says, "The principle itself was common to Goth and Celt, or, rather, I would say, to all the tribes that had not fallen off to either of the *Aphelia*, or extreme distances from the generic character of man, the wild or the barbarous state, but who remained either constituent parts or appendages of the *stirps generosa seu historica*, as a philosophic friend has named that portion of the Semitic and Japetic races which had not degenerated below the conditions of progressive civilisation. It was, I say, common to all the primitive races, that in taking possession of a new country, and in the division of the land into heritable estates among the individual warriors or heads of families, a reserve should be made

for the *nation itself*." . . . "These, *the property and the nationality*, were the two constituent factors, the opposite but correspondent and reciprocally supporting counterweights of the commonwealth."¹ This "nationality" amongst us became invested in our National Church, and "the object of the National Church was to secure and improve that civilisation, without which the nation could be neither permanent nor progressive." Its religious purpose was this—that the lowliest of the casual poor should not be deprived of man's true heritage: "Try to conceive a man without the ideas of God, eternity, freedom, will, absolute truth, of the good, the true, the beautiful, the infinite; an animal endowed with a memory of appearances and facts might remain; but the man will have vanished, and you have instead a creature *more subtle than any beast of the field*, but likewise *cursed above every beast of the field*."² The nationality had a social and political office also; it was "to form and train up the people of the country to be obedient, free, useful, organisable subjects, *citizens*, and patriots, living to the benefit of the State, and prepared to die for its defence."

I have affirmed that a share in the National Church property not only is nothing analogous to pensions, but stands opposed to them in principle and tendency. The quotations above made explain my meaning. A share in the nationality is a share in the *citizenship* of the nation. The "voluntary system,"

¹ Coleridge's *Church and State*, according to the *Idea of each*.

² *Ibid.*

as imposed upon Ireland three centuries ago by a giant "eviction," is exclusion from it; and pensions are an alms such as the State might give to aliens. Between the *nationalty* and that *nationality* of which we have heard much at home, and seen something of late in foreign countries, the connection is plain. There is a negative nationality which means hostility to other countries: there is a positive one which means the possession of what belongs to our own. I trust that Ireland does not despise nationality in that form in which it seems a practicable thing, and that England is not resolved to deny her what, *in this form*, is necessary both for her and for the Empire. The State has an interest in this matter. Loyalty is the attribute of subjects; but a reverence for law proceeds from the sense of citizenship—which must be preceded by the condition of citizenship. Coleridge, whose philosophy so deeply appreciated the "national reserve," would yet, by the strangest of paradoxes, have withheld it from the Catholic clergy. He stumbled against a polemical antagonism, and assumed that they were subject to a "foreign allegiance." Had this judgment of them been right, he should have affirmed that they must neither be recognised nor tolerated, and—as a consequence—have bidden Ireland to depart. He had not apprehended that, according to the Catholic estimate, a "foreign allegiance," as regards matters ecclesiastical, is found in the allegiance of the Church to the State in spiritual things. Men declaim about a "divided loyalty!" as if loyalty had been first dis-

covered in the sixteenth century. They have yet to learn that with the best intentions a man can be but half a loyalist who is not alike submissive, in the spiritual sphere to a universal, and, in the national sphere to the civil authority, rendering thus obedience at once to Cæsar and to God.

It was a noble thought, and worthy of Catholic times, when a noble and loyal nation devoted a property to God. God kept that property for the nation ! Great hearts could trust great hearts ; and each generation knew that the next would ratify the gift and partake the merit. The policy was tender ; it provided a spring for every thirsty lip, and willed that the ministrations of grace should surround us like nature's light and air. It was magnanimous ; it gave much that it might receive much ; and it could pardon somewhat. It was profound ; it provided for the clergy a support in one sense fixed, and thereby it secured their independence, in another sense fluctuating, and thereby it bound up both their sympathies and their interests with those of the people. It was impartial ; it neither placed the pastors in dependence on the Government, nor assumed that the normal relation between the Church and State must be one of hate and war. It had this one fault, which should not be concealed, viz. that it tended to enrich a Church too much in the course of ages, thereby enfeebling her within. From the modern world the chance of this solitary evil is removed by the devastations of past times, and by the chief characteristics of the present. Above all, the

ancient system was provident. It took thought for intervals of famine and war, of bewildered fancy, or political confusion. It provided even for what it did not foresee—the condition of a Christian country which has lost unity of Faith. Some of the modern State-scholastics assure us that a State may not divide religious endowments among various religious bodies because it has a conscience ! It is because it preserves a conscience, even when it has lost unity of Faith, that it may and must do this. A State knows just as much about Revealed Truth as the Nation which it impersonates knows, and no more. If it confesses a unity of Faith which is desirable, but non-existent, it confesses a falsehood. If it confesses that a particular Nation, even though it has lost unity of Faith, still retains Christianity, and honours Religion according to its lights, it confesses the truth. If it confesses that to restore, as far as is possible, what was unjustly taken away is a Christian act, this is not to be branded as State Indifferentism. It is State Piety.

In this matter the action of Ireland must be prudent. Her sons must remember that while the exercise of that virtue involves great self-sacrifice, the neglect of it is, and has ever been, nothing less than the betrayal of Ireland. They must remember that Time fights for their country, and therefore makes impatience a folly. They must understand the needs of that country in their fulness, and not exaggerate the importance of parts. They must appreciate also the situation of those opposed to them—the errors that were inherited—

the ill-will that was misconception—the misconception that rose inevitably, by a law of moral perspective, from a false position. They have to deal with angry men whose weapons of war have lost their edge, and with good men whose hostility may be an erring form of loyalty.

Her action must be just. Ireland has Protestant sons as well as Catholic, and he is at heart but sectarian who imagines that in their interests their country has no part. If among those who advocate “the voluntary principle for all” there exist any who are flattered by the thought of that retribution which it would inflict, I will ask them to reflect whether this thought is worthy of a Catholic. None are now responsible for the past except those who will listen to no terms of reasonable accord. Ireland demands justice and her right, not revenge. There are wrongs too great for revenge—except the Christian revenge. But we live in the nineteenth century. To leave men without any religious endowments because they are not entitled to a religious Ascendency would be to imitate the injustice we denounce. They not only are in actual possession of endowments, but have possessed them for several centuries, and in many cases they, or their forefathers, doubtless bought their property on the understanding that religious ministrations should be continued to them gratis. Were they to find themselves deprived of all such aids, the loss to them would be a loss to Catholics too; and the heart-burnings left behind could not but forbid that peace to Ireland which Religious Equality effected by just means would secure.

Those who demand that the Irish Church should cease to be disinherited maintain no narrow dogmatism with regard to the religious uses to which the restored property should be applied. Past events have left us burthened with many needs, and our share of the Church property when divided would not suffice for them all. It might, for some years at least, be applied mainly to assistance, given proportionately to local efforts, in the building of churches and presbyteries, reformatories, penitentiaries, ecclesiastical seminaries, the maintenance of cathedrals, orphanages, and other charitable asylums, under distinctly religious superintendence, as well as to the purchase of glebes—unless another provision should be made for that purpose. For the Catholic Church I should never desire excessive wealth. I think the system that mingles endowments with voluntary contributions is the best and the freest. For other communities it would be presumptuous in me to speak. Both for their own sake, and for Catholic interests, I wish them nothing but good ; but, however I may differ from them, I do not think so meanly of them as to identify that good with the maintenance of injustice. In dealing with this question of Church property, we must remember that Ireland will have to spend many millions on churches alone before she is supplied with such as other countries possess.

What follows practically from the loss of all Church property Dr. Murray, of Maynooth, informs us : “ The number of our priests is so small that it might increase *twofold, threefold, fourfold*—a superabundant share of

labour remaining for each. The results are, first, that a large proportion of the clergy are overburthened with work, and early broken down by excessive toil. To become a missionary in some parishes in Ireland is like taking up a residence in the 'white man's grave.' Secondly, after all, an immense mass of spiritual destitution exists, which, with the present number of clergymen, no human energy is capable of relieving." What is the consequence of "Spiritual destitution"? The loss of souls innumerable.

The question is not one respecting our cities or the rich lands in their neighbourhood. When, hereafter our outcasts and our criminals look up to us in their extremity, are we to answer them that a noble property was set apart for their spiritual needs by the nation, but that not a fragment of it may now be so applied, whether for the building of churches, or schools, or parochial residences which would indirectly but largely add to the number of the priests, because that property was alienated centuries ago by a disloyal State, and because it was complimented away, or talked away, a second time by patriotic rhetoricians, who declared that, though Ireland would not longer endure the existence of Protestant endowments, she was herself too exalted to desire "a penny of Church property?" Was there ever such barren and unpractical declamation? What we do *not* want is to injure our neighbour. What we do want is to vindicate once more for the whole people of Ireland their sacred inheritance. Is Ireland to renounce her Church

property that she may get "Religious Equality" a couple of years earlier than it would otherwise be hers? There is a voice more potent than mine which protests against the wrong. It is the voice that comes from ruined abbeys and desecrated shrines, and that demands whether the work of ruin has not gone far enough, and whether the passions have not had their day. It is a voice from the prisons of Glasgow and Liverpool, and from their streets, trod by many forlorn ones who once trod in innocence the spotless fields of Ireland. It is a voice from wastes where churches are few and temptation is universal, and where sin not "voluntary" results from inevitable ignorance and despair.

Do we aspire to gain for Ireland a first-class religious condition? Let us not deceive ourselves. There are things which the "voluntary system" can do, and others which it cannot do. It cannot keep up the decorous magnificence of religion. It cannot maintain the cathedral system. It is not stones and mortar that make the cathedral. A cathedral is the seat, at once, of the bishop, and of that chapter which is his council, and around it should cluster its library, its schools, its seminary, and its hospital. Merely to conduct its services as they were conducted for centuries together in days when it was not only the house of God but the palace of the poor—when the peasant could make the responses, and princes were proud to chant among the vicars choral—requires endowment.

The "voluntary system" does well up to a certain

point, and then fails, for an obvious reason. All good men appreciate what may be called the necessary things, as regards religious ministrations; but the immense importance of what lies beyond mere necessities they cannot appreciate till they have learned it by experience.

Is Ireland unworthy of what, in other countries, has ennobled freedom or mitigated bondage? If so, why? Let us not imagine that splendid rites are thrown away upon congregations largely composed of the poor. The poor are entitled to the best in the Christian fold. The peasant has the best right to an elevating ritual, because his own heart is most often a Christian temple. He will also profit most by it, for two reasons—first, because, when duly explained, it is the best mode of enriching him with ideas which others can win from books; secondly, because, his life being a simple one, ritual is not for him sensualised by low associations. In our days a religious procession is sometimes criticised as “theatrical” by persons ignorant that such solemnities had existed for a thousand years before the theatre began to mimic them.

Let us not forget the demands of the age in which we live. To confound the nineteenth with the eighteenth century would be the greatest of errors. The time when persecution forbade to Ireland all but the bare necessities of religion was also a time that sheltered her from many temptations. The world was no snare to those from whom unjust laws had cut off their worldly portion. Our advance in freedom and

wealth carries with it proportionate temptations and special responsibilities. But this is not all. In our days learning is needed, and leisure is necessary for learning. Even among those whose time is constantly broken in on, there are among our clergy men who steal hours from their sleep for study, and others whose admirable gifts make them effective preachers: but these are the very men who most complain that the Church is not supplied with all she needs. The Psalmist says that he kept silence before "the fire kindled," and *at last* he spake with his tongue; and it is in meditative solitudes that those preachers have been formed who have shaken the world. It is in her ascetic retreats that the Church trains those spiritual athletes to whom no controversy has either the alarms or the more dangerous excitements of novelty. In them, too, are formed those men who keep the vigils of contemplation; and there, also, are those whose hermit spirits, remote alike from worldly and polemical strifes, acquire such a delicacy of grain that Divine Truths become graven upon them with a physiognomic force, like those images which the solar beam carries with it everywhere, but which can only impress themselves with a lifelike reality upon a substance especially prepared. Extraordinary gifts are seldom developed without an extraordinary training. The ordinary labours of the working clergy must take precedence of all others; consequently, it is rarely among them that a Bossuet is found, and more seldom an Aquinas or an à-Kempis.

Once more ; Paganism is practically restored in a nation in which literature and the liberal arts have lost their Christian character. Not only the theological science, but the literature of the Church, has ever been largely connected with its cathedral and university endowments, from which also the separated bodies have derived, though indirectly, the best part of their intellectual influence. What would the Anglican body have been without that succession of learned and eloquent men who emerged from the cloisters of Oxford and Cambridge, Canterbury and York? To them their Church owes its place in English history, and religion owes much of the hold it retains on the English mind. The old cathedrals are no longer ours, and the very weapons drawn from the armoury of the Church have often been used against her. Are we to spurn as a worthless thing that which would win the highest accomplishment from the highest genius, direct both by the insight of Faith, and devote both to the service of Truth? Does Ireland value no longer what she once so abundantly produced? Let us think on this matter apart from the tactics of the moment. The weapon of error is no longer the civil sword—it is intellect, and that which trains intellect. Trained faculties are to untrained what steel is to rough iron, or an army to a mob. Much of the intellect of our time is engaged on the side not only of error, but of unbelief.

The press brings the battle to the hearth. The storm which burst upon Germany a century ago has

overtaken England at last. In the struggle between Belief and Unbelief the devout instincts, the conservative habits, and the best learning of England will do all that these things can do, external to the fold of Catholic unity ; and other works will be produced not less excellent than the labours of Dr. Pusey against German Biblical Criticism, and Bishop Lightfoot's against Rationalism. But though the battle may last longer than in Germany, the result is scarcely doubtful. Those who three centuries ago started on a new way built their boat for river navigation ; but the crew now on board it find themselves at the river's mouth, and hear the voices of the multitudinous sea. We know the work which lies before the Church and the world. Is Ireland's Church to take no part in that work ? Her interests as well as her conscience forbid such inglorious inaction. Modern Ireland is not quite as exempt from trial as the old Christian settlements in Paraguay. Theology translates itself into poetry, novels, and newspaper leaders. Unbelief is an infectious disease, and the dangers of society are our dangers. If we are to face them a large culture is necessary for us—one capable of growing, as science feels her way through the worlds. Criticism, history, science—these are things certain to make progress. Are we to remain where we were when the penal laws kept low the theological pulse both in the oppressor and the oppressed ?

With adequate funds the circle from which our Irish students are drawn would thus also be in-

definitely enlarged—a most important consideration. We can seldom enter an Irish school without remarking some boy whose eye and brow plainly indicate some special gift, intellectual or spiritual, and announce one of Nature's nobility. Here is one on whom in old times the Church would have fixed her ken from afar, and whom she would have lifted from degree to degree till perhaps she had lodged him in a bishop's palace. Amongst us the boy has little chance of laying his gift on the altar if his parents are very poor. With our Church property we should have the means of culling the best from every parish, training at "little seminaries" those selected, and, if they indicated a vocation, transferring them thence to the diocesan seminaries. To other classes in society Church property would render a different but not less efficient aid, for the same end. It is not from one class, but from every class in civil society—the higher, the middle, and the lower—that the clergy ought to be recruited. Measured by the standard of those functions entrusted to the Christian priesthood, all secular distinctions of high and low sink of course into insignificance; but this does not conclude the matter. Every class has its peculiar gifts; in one, genius is chiefly found; in another, prudence; in another, the habit of meekness, blended with that of command,—each of these gifts should be dedicated to the sacred ministry, and, in return, each class of society would receive its special consecration.

Let us turn to the Irish "of the Dispersion." In

America there are said to be seven millions of Ireland's sons. Of these how many are Catholics, and sound Catholics? Our clergy who have travelled there assure us that the parents almost always remain true to their Faith, but that the children too often fall from it insensibly from lack of priests and religious schools. This was all that they lacked; for America has ever respected Religious Freedom—a happy auspice for her future greatness and peace. From of old it was given to Ireland to add nations to the fold of Christ, as the ruins of Iona and Lindisfarne witness to this day, and many a sacred seat in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and other lands, where an Irish founder is still revered. The same duty is now laid upon her under the penalty of seeing a large part of her own children in remote lands absorbed into the barbarism of a civilisation merely material. They must become either the missionaries of her faith, or its scandal. The German race swarms over the new world, while the French and Italians remain at home, and England spends £500,000, or, as some assert, £1,000,000 per annum on missions—missions confessed, I fear, by her best informed sons to be sadly deficient in result, yet, as we gladly own, most honourable to those who devote their wealth to a sacred end, and no doubtful omen of what England will effect if one day restored to that Unity without which the missionaries of contending Bodies preach, not in the new tongues of Pentecost, but in the dialects of Babel. In the meantime Ireland remains; and a providence that cannot be mis-

taken, and that turns evil to good, has scattered her race over farthest lands. Ireland's vocation was sealed to her by the afflictions of ages. Through all her trials her fidelity to her Faith was her chief glory, and its final triumph will be her noblest victory. The character as well as the history of her race qualifies it for its task. It is strong where others are weak, and it is weak where others are strong. For other men there remain inferior virtues, even when the highest is lost, which give them outward respectability and inward self-respect ; but the Irishman, when stripped of those virtues which grow only in the light of faith, is feeble socially, and abject individually, and knows himself to be both. When the North fell from the ancient Church, one island alone remained faithful—standing apart from the rest, like a solitary rock-fortress, detached from a long line of cliffs. That island still watches her children as they are scattered by calamity over all lands, and sees them everywhere covered with one glory, and one alone. Only the highest has been left to them. But it is not her eye only that should rest upon them, but her helping hand.

Let us next consider the case of the Catholic laity, who are generally educated in colleges conducted by the clergy, and between whose intellectual culture and that of the clergy any great disproportion would entail serious evils. It will be granted that they are entitled to an education equal to that at present enjoyed by those who frequent the schools and universities of

England. In some respects they need a superior one. For them it would not suffice to be able to read Plato and to analyse the metres of Sophocles ; we rank the religious parts of education far higher than the intellectual ; but we require also a first-rate classical education. It is that, in combination with Catholic instincts and principles, which develops the characteristic refinement that especially belongs to the best Irish nature. What should we gain by any multiplication of our colleges if we had not competent instructors for them ? An education that "crams" the mind with knowledge, but neither develops nor disciplines its powers, unites the minimum of knowledge with the maximum of vanity ; nor can a nation be infested with a greater pest than a superabundance of low and trashy ability. What Ireland needs is not the empirical omniscience distilled from the lecture bazaar, with its full apparatus of physiological collections, but mature scholarship, solid learning, the moral mind, the judicious temper, the serene strength, the proportioned being ; and these things come both directly and indirectly from a learned clergy and a fully developed Church. In Ireland there are many who, owing to the confiscations of past times, belong no longer to the highest grade in position, although they belong to it in descent. The place justly theirs they can only permanently recover by successful industry, and by that solid culture which alone keeps what it wins, and transmits it. The nobility of Ireland ought one day to be a double nobility, consisting of those who have

the virtue that holds its own, and of those who have the virtue that recovers its own. For this consummation Ireland must have the highest and soundest culture.

. In these matters not to advance is to recede. Amid all the tumults of the seventeenth century, the number and importance of Irish writers belonging to the ancient race continued to be considerable. They lived more near the age of Catholic endowments than the men of the eighteenth, and retained more of cultivation. In many of our cities the booksellers declare that they sell fewer books now than thirty years ago, and these of a lower quality. Under such circumstances how are we either to illustrate our ancient Irish stores, as yet so scantily explored, or to create a new and Catholic literature? The loss to society is greater than we know. A mere increase of wealth may aggravate the evil. Those who have acquired wealth sometimes desire for their sons but the knowledge that goes to the market, in which case the new estate is apt to go to the hammer. Wealth, without a proportionate culture, is more likely to change a good Catholic into a bad one than to make him worthy of the position he has gained. If he ignores all that could give dignity to that position he drifts, like other light things, away.

There are persons who would convert all Church property into an Education fund. It is exactly when Church property remains undiverted from its primary—that is, its religious purpose—that it most

effectually subserves its secondary purpose in connection with education. England is a sufficient illustration of this principle. Her Church property has not been sacrificed on the plea of being devoted to education ; and for that reason her educational system has continued to rest largely on a religious basis ; while in those Continental countries the Church property of which has been secularised, the great triumph of statesmen, nominally Catholic, has been the building up of a merely secular education. If, in the old Catholic days, a Bishop of Winchester built a new College at Oxford, his example incited in recent times a Protestant Bishop of Durham, in conjunction with his Chapter, to found the University of Durham. So, again, as regards the education of the poor. In England, as in Ireland, a great battle was fought, a certain doctrinaire school of politicians insisting on secular education. The clergy who opposed their theory were not helpless supplicants. They had the old national endowments, and largely used them to create provisional institutes : they had a status, also, and they used the social and political influence it gave them. Their opponents came to terms. If ever England's Church property is secularised its whole endowed education will be secularised also. In place of the present Established Church there will rise up an Established Church of Schoolmasters, with advanced opinions and a "mission." The theory which its partisans called Liberal, and which its opponents denounced as Indifferentism, might have hardened

itself into tyranny, and heated itself into fanaticism, had not a timely wisdom come to it through its consciousness of weakness. That political enthusiasm which ignores a nation's conscience in the desire to constitute itself a nation's providence, is by nothing so speedily allayed as by what demonstrates its futility. Had we possessed even a fragment of our Church property we could at an early time have supplemented a not irreligious but still an imperfect system of popular education by the creation of complete and religious training schools.

It is the good soil that best repays high culture. What a harvest has not been raised from but one small section of Irish intellect! The strength of Swift, the subtlety of Berkeley, the grace of Goldsmith, the wit of Sheridan, Grattan's eloquence, the depth and height of Burke, the manifold accomplishment of Canning! Yet in these men the predominant race of Ireland had little part, and her religion less. Others might be named who illustrated both, but how few compared with those who ought to have been the glory of Ireland! It is chiefly through a knowledge of Greek, and a familiarity with high logic, that the accuracy, the clearness, and the flexible power are acquired without which genius commonly runs to waste. In the absence of a solid training, the mind of a nation is strongly tempted to throw itself upon its smaller gifts, relinquishing the arduous for the easy, and following out that "broadway" of literature which ends in an age of improvisatores,

when every one speaks, while no one thinks or reads, and the universal vivacity leaves behind it nothing worthy of remembrance. Where the intellect is versatile, facility abundant, and the temperament pleasurable, this temptation proves most fatal.

In material things compromise is allowable ; but in spiritual we have to seek, and avow that we seek, not the better only, but the best. For Ireland, an unvulgar ambition is a religious duty. It was once said that Greece had brought her conqueror into captivity by her arts and sciences ; but Greece was as inferior to Rome in virtue as she was superior to it in intellect. If the estimate which some have formed of the Irish intellect be correct, it is difficult to limit the influence it might exert, when fully developed and duly disciplined, over an empire on which the sun never sets. The intellect of the north is great, but the eclipse of the Catholic faith has dimmed it in things divine : that of the south is great, but an epicurean temperament has enervated it. What the trained Irish intellect is remains to be proved. It depends on what the character of the race eventually becomes. Faculties alone do not make the mind ; and its available strength is that of the character with which those faculties are united. The Irish character is unlike that of most Western nations. It has been said of the Irish, that is when at their best, for to such only the expression can apply ;

“ Ye are Greeks
In intellect, and Hebrews in soul ; ”

the highest imaginable praise—if not that praise which is “censure in disguise”—but squandered gifts made of Greece a parasite and a slave ; and a vocation missed reduced that race which gave mankind the Bible to become a seller of old clothes.

If Ireland would shun a similar reverse let her remember that her Religion is her Cause, and that if aught which belongs to her Church ever takes in her estimation a secondary place, or remodels itself to suit some exigency of the hour, the Ireland of history is at an end. Again, as in the days of her noblest and most successful struggle, that for Catholic emancipation, she seeks her right, and she seeks the right of her Faith, and again she finds them united. Her cause is a holy cause, not by choice only but by necessity and a divine decree ; and as the High Priest of old, when he entered into the Holy of Holies, bore upon his breast those twelve jewels which witnessed to the twelve Tribes of Israel, so now, with a converse fitness and an equal duty, a religious and just people, advancing towards the gates of its new and higher destinies, must bear upon its breast that cause which is the cause of God. May it bear that cause to victory ; a victory whether speedy or remote, at least deserved.

By some it is argued that if the State confers a Church property on a religious body it must retain an equal right to cancel the gift when it sees fit. The allegation is founded on a misconception. The Nation exists in two relations, the civil and ecclesi-

astical—in the former alone the State is its representative ; and as such the State but *adds a civil sanction* to the moral basis on which Church property essentially rests, as a man adds a legal security to some family covenant which honourable men would respect even though unprotected by law. Throughout Christendom, Church property was a willing offering from the heart of each Nation, tendered for the glory of God, the good of the poor, and the consecration of the community. It was the inspiration of Christian society in its heaven-guided infancy. It had its origin when the Nation's organisation was yet imperfect, and the bones of its future greatness were as yet written but in the Book of God : under its plastic influence the august structure was completed ; and a Nation, born of the dust, “became a living soul.” Church property was the homage offered by a Nation's possessions, as sound faith was the homage offered by its intellect, and Christian law the homage offered by its will. In each Nation a Church was the spiritual representative of a people, became the nurse of its growing constitution, sympathised with what was pure in its national aspirations, reprovèd what was erroneous or exaggerated in them, remained its solace in all dangers, and advanced with it, the companion of its glories. Philosophically, at once, and historically, the Church in each Nation preceded the completed State, as we now understand that term. The State is not, as regards Church property, either originator or master, but protector, and in restoring to Ireland her

Church property it would but redress a past wrong. This part of the Catholic tradition, like many others, has been largely preserved in the more learned Protestant bodies. It is substantially Hooker's theory, with this momentous exception, that that great writer was forced by "accomplished facts" to regard a National Church not only as a *distinct* portion of Christendom, but as a *separate* portion.

This mystification about "State Endowments" is a play upon words. The "State" includes the "Executive Government" as well as the "Legislature;" and Governmental influence has often bequeathed uncomfortable associations in Church matters. But the restoration of what an unjust law took from Ireland involves only an act of the Legislature; and it is on acts of the Legislature that Property and Liberty rest alike for protection. If it is law that gives a civil sanction to Church property, the true basis of which is, notwithstanding, found in a moral right, it is law not less that gives a civil sanction to man's personal freedom, the spiritual ground of which exists doubtless in the fact that man is a creature formed in the Divine image. From our latest built cathedral to the coat on our back, there exists nothing outward, whether sacred or secular, of which we might not be deprived, if law but stood neutral. Every church, as well as every house in our possession we owe largely, not only to law, but to recent laws substituted for Penal laws; and the policy which prefers outlawry to law must be a very comprehensive, if rather incomprehensible one.

Let us test this notable maxim. Suppose that glebes and parochial houses were offered to us—no one says that they would have been objected to thirty years ago; but the new theorists must reject them now, because “what the law gave the law can take away!” The Legislature is, of course, theoretically free to repeal all laws alike, whether those relating to sacred or secular matters; but Nations that have sense deal with probabilities, not with possibilities scrutinised through a microscope. A morbid suspiciousness is as opposed to prudence as rashness itself can be—it, too, is the substitution of the imagination for reason; and it commonly alternates with credulity. The peasant who suspects the sober adviser, absorbs with hungry ear the first whisper of some foreign “sympathiser,” whom he never saw before. The enthusiast who can see but a trap in the justest and most necessary law, has an implicit faith in new allies, whose “voluntary” principles would confessedly compel them to follow up the destruction of Ireland’s Church property, their own objects once attained, by that of all endowments for religious education.

At least let us be consistent. How would the objectors to Church property, and its just distribution, deal with the “bequests for religious purposes” made in our own day? They, too, rest upon that suspicious thing, law, and upon a recent law passed to cancel an old injustice and absurdity. On what principle are we to act? We must not—now or ever—receive back any part of our Church property; but we may and

should accumulate a second Church property, resting alike on law, and no less exposed to the ravage of the State, in the hope that after a dozen generations have gone to their account, we may be able, through the accumulation of bequests, to do just what the restoration of our Church property to its original uses would enable us to do now! This strange confusion of thought assumes that religious offerings and Church property are things of an opposite character and hostile spirit. On the contrary, they belong to the same order, spring from the same motives, and seek the same ends. Church property, when not excessive, as it doubtless was for many centuries, simply provides that the voluntary offerings of one generation, which are insufficient, should be supplemented by those of twenty preceding generations, capitalised and distributed; and that a nation, which is a creation of God, should offer its homage to God. The "voluntary system, pure and simple," must interdict all voluntary offerings which are not dissipated as they are offered, lest a "Church Property" should be their final result.

It is sometimes objected that Church property did not exist among the early Christians! How could it have existed in the days of persecution? When the Christian clergy lived by the labour of their hands, did the Christian laity live in palaces? They were liable at any moment to be called on for the surrender both of property and life. Then, as in later times, proportion was maintained. The early Christians were under the ban of law, and therefore could not by

law create a Church property; but they did more. They frequently renounced all property, and had all things in common. Modern Communism inverts the principle of the early Christians. It denies the right of property from a preposterous theory of justice, based on an alleged *natural* equality of man. The early Christians recognised the *spiritual* equality of the Redeemed Race, and chose, from love, to hold all property for God and the poor. Their life was that of monks in the world. When persecution ceased the same principle was embodied in a modified but permanent form; and the whole of a nation's property was consecrated by the solemn dedication of a part of it to God.

There remains but one objection more that demands notice; yet many persons regard it as the most important of all, and give it the title of the "practical view of the subject." It is this. "The English Dissenters and Voluntaryists will be your allies if you destroy all ecclesiastical endowments, and on no other terms." The persons who use this argument have apparently no exalted opinion of the friends whom they fancy they can thus turn to account without being turned to account by them. Their proposed allies, they affirm, regard "the State Church Endowment in Ireland" as "a monstrous scandal, and a bitter grievance;" yet, they add that these allies will give no aid to Irish Catholics unless in this high matter they adopt the principles of the English Sectaries. Be it so: It is unworthy of Ireland either

to become subservient to this party, or to bear malice against it. But to choose our friends is to choose our enemies also. Let us see how many parties would be made our enemies by the policy thus recommended to us.

Most thoughtful men who value the preservation of the Empire would be among them. The just division of Ireland's Church property is the course in harmony with imperial interests. There is one momentous question for the wise and far-seeing English legislator—"How will our mode of dealing with the Irish Establishment affect the English?" Now, of the two methods suggested, one must be most dangerous to the English Establishment, while the other must strengthen its position. Distribute the Irish Church property fairly between Catholics and Protestants, and you legislate on the ground of circumstances confessedly *special to Ireland*. At the Reformation the Irish people remained Catholic. The problem is to-day what it was three centuries ago. It is not with churches as with individuals. The generations pass; property is bought, sold, and mortgaged; new proprietors take the place of old, and prescription makes their claims good. It is thus in Ireland. The settlement of property has gradually blended itself with the interests of every class, nay, so knitted itself to the whole structure of the body politic that the repeal of the Act of Settlement, whether by avowed violence, or indirectly and by fraudulent legislation, would now be not the amputation of a limb, but a

more formidable operation—the extraction of a spine. Prescription rules in all nations. Were it otherwise wounds could never heal, and, property never becoming assured, the descendants of the earlier proprietors could never recover by industry, and by the gradual blending of races and interests, what can thus alone be permanently regained. Time creates prescriptive right ; but while time *does* all, time *is* nothing. Races blend with time, but churches remain apart. Individuals die, but churches live. In Ireland the two ecclesiastical rivals stand face to face now, as the individual claimants for confiscated estates stood in the first generation alone. To England this principle does not apply. In England the nation became Protestant, and the sects successively separated from the Establishment. Again, the Catholics in Ireland form one solid and single body, whereas in England the Dissenters consist of separate bodies in frequent change. Lastly, there remains this momentous difference. The English sects left the Establishment in a large measure because they disapproved of endowments, and consequently they could now hardly demand them. From the just distribution of Irish Church property the English Establishment would therefore have nothing to fear, for no precedent would be created by it. On the contrary, that Establishment would gain the support of all in Ireland who respected Church property.

But, on the other hand, the secularisation of Church property in Ireland would plainly be a

precedent for England. All who are in favour of the voluntary system would say, "You have yielded to the demand of Catholic Ireland:—yield then to that of Protestant England. You might have satisfied the Irish by merely giving them a just share of that property the alienation of which was their wrong; but you can satisfy us in one way only. The wrong we complain of is that all do not rest alike on the voluntary system. On that principle we built our secession, and in it alone we believe." It is most probable that to secularise the Irish Church property would be to secularise the English later; and thoughtful statesmen should resist in the beginning what they can hardly resist at the end. In England Church property and private property are inextricably interwoven, the livings belonging, for the most part, to the landed proprietors, and being, to a large extent, filled by their sons or brothers. Secularise the one, and the confiscation of the other will follow soon; and not alone that of *landed* property.

One great party in the State, or at least in the country, is founded on a love of what is traditional: the venerable has for it a charm; its strength is loyalty of heart, and it claims to represent permanence. How vehemently all who belong to it would denounce a demand which they would stigmatise, not only as un-Catholic, but revolutionary! Statesmen of this school have often been assured that if Catholics were treated with entire justice, they would be found, as their ancestors were, the most steadfast in the maintenance

—not, indeed, of all that time has accidentally preserved, like straws in amber—but of all that is worthy of surviving. Such a claim could never be asserted again.

Next there is the great constitutional party of Progress. Would not its adherents say to us, "Hitherto your demand has been for an equal place in the Constitution. Ever since the latter part of the last century we have denounced those who identified with that Constitution those narrow restrictions on Catholics which rose out of the passions and panics of stormy times. But in that Constitution, Church endowments have had a place for a thousand years. You are not now demanding its extension to Ireland, but its abolition. It has been our principle to make reforms in time, but to make them so as to preserve, not lose, the original type. Our aspiration has ever been to raise the lowly, not to pull down the lofty; to abolish caste, by opening all ranks to the energies of all, but not to destroy gradation; to strengthen both liberty and privilege by resting both on a wider basis. We cannot discard all that we have known of freedom or of greatness, to sail without a compass into unknown seas."

Next for the rough and ready Practical Statesman, and the man of common sense, not of parties. He will say: "Experience had taught us that the State never makes a greater mistake than in needlessly quarrelling with the Catholic Church. It is always cropping up again, like big stones on an ill-gravelled road. Attempts

to persecute and attempts to bribe it have everywhere turned out failures. In Ireland misrule attained the scale heroic ;—the strongest of moral influences could hardly have sufficed to heal the wounds of centuries ; yet anti-Catholic laws proscribed the only *moral* power that existed in the land. When the Penal Laws were annulled there remained but one course—to treat the nation and its Church with justice, and require obedience in return. But your ‘secularisation’ policy would render this course impossible, either now or at any future time ; for it would prevent just law from ever making atonement for the ravage of unjust law. Who would benefit by secularisation ? Neither your nobles, nor your peasants, nor your priests ; none but agitators without a definite scope or consistent aim—men important only in comparison with the pettiness they create around them—men whose pasture is ever on the garbage of old battlefields, and whose trade it is to drench a whole people in the gloomy raptures of an endless wrath, like dog-merchants who saturate their puppies with ardent spirits to prevent their growth. The Protestants, stripped and whipped, would be cast adrift, the implacable foes of a State that had turned them to account, and betrayed them. The Catholics would be irrevocably pledged to the latest and worst enemy of their Church—democracy. England would find in Ireland, not an equal mate, but a shrivelled arm : Ireland would clasp in her two races, not reconciled brethren, but old foes with a new wrong : and your Church—its principles dis-

carded, and its property dissolved—would stand up amid the ruins of both, neither what she once was nor what she might yet be—neither the consistent with-stander of wrong, nor the newly-dowered heir of a restored right—would stand up a priesthood and a plebs, not a clergy and a laity.”

If we would avoid such reproaches, or such misgivings, let us remain true to our principles. Their strength has been proved; and the enemies of whatever bears the name of Catholic base their hope upon the gradual relinquishment of them by the Catholic Church in Ireland. Whatever we may have to encounter, there are two things which I hope we shall escape, viz. the compliments of those who profess no respect for our principles, and the gains which are purchased by eventual loss. Externally we have nothing more to fear. Our remaining dangers are from within. Catholicity and Radicalism are things opposite in character, like an acid and alkali, and inevitably neutralise each other. The habit of insubordination in civil things is unconsciously transferred to the spiritual sphere, and the peril is first felt by the clergy. Should our Irish Catholicism ever become impregnated with a certain revolutionary spirit from which it has suffered many wrongs of old, and temptations in later times, but from which it has hitherto preserved its inmost heart unsullied—should it fail to resist the contamination of the age, and fail also to meet the advancing needs of the age—then, although its definitions of Faith remain unchanged, as they ever

must, they will remain but like the mountain outlines of a land upon whose habitable plains a malaria has settled and broods.

The expression "levelling up" has been called a novelty and denounced as obscure. It is on "levelling up" that Christianity has been engaged ever since it declared war upon serfdom and laid the foundations of a Christendom. The obscurity may be dissipated by degrees. It is not only to the question of the Irish Church that the principle applies. On the power of statesmen to understand it will depend their power of solving both in Europe and America all the great political problems of the coming time. Destruction is an easy thing: construction is an arduous but noble one. It is something to create; it is something to preserve: but in restoration—not the restoration of accidental details, but the restoration of permanent principles—what is great in both stands united. This is our work in Ireland, and every English statesman, wise or capable of wisdom, even if he begins with opposing, will end with applauding it.

There are those to whom everything in politics is a game or a jest, but with us it must not be so; the greatness of our cause forbids it. There are those who ever seek short cuts, and lose themselves in quagmires; but with us it must not be so; the goal stands right before us, and we have but to walk straight. It is not for us to consult auguries, or vaticinate about party combinations, or throw in a Church to balance the trembling scale. Alas! how much are men

deluded by what is near ! How easily can a pebble, held close to the eye, blot sun and moon from the firmament ! We must think of the great things of the past and future, for they are essential, and pass by the accidents of the moment. The religious question of Ireland will be brought to a sound settlement neither by startling leaps nor by clever devices, but by the progress, whether rapid or slow, of just principles and generous aims in her and in England. Many persons assure us that the "spirit of the age" is opposed to Religious Endowments. The age, like the individual, is attended by two spirits, and one of these is an apostate one. Assuming, however, the correctness of the prophecy implied, it is irrelevant. Inevitable wrongs are not only deprived of their best consolation, but are rendered infinitely worse by the mean complicity of the wronged. The conscience of the guilty party is stultified as well as hardened by such tricky complicity ; and, the sound principle being once surrendered, there remains no power of resisting the next aggression, and none of recovering what has been lost. To contend for the Right, and to fail, is the next best thing to success.

The cause of Church property is not a sectarian one ; it is that of justice, adherence to which, as distinguished from what faction calls a pious zeal, is, in politics, the chief note of a statesman truly religious. It is the cause of peace also, and we must sustain it in the spirit of peace, remembering that Ireland has need of all her sons, and that it little becomes us,

deliberating on matters of gravest religious importance, to permit our blood to be agitated by the passions of the inferior animals. Would that Ireland's sons had known this in time! The moment they had attained their civil freedom it became their primary duty to vindicate the rights of religion. Had they sought first what was spiritual the other things needed would have been "added unto them." But they preferred "Repeal," which flattered the imagination, to that which was precious to the soul. Let us now accept our lesson, and demand the equal rights of our Church, insisting upon this one thing—no less and no more—and bearing in mind that Powers greater than our own are at our side, if, having once asserted this sacred cause, we uphold and advance the same with invincible fortitude by all just and expedient means known to the Constitution, and by them alone. If a nation's sacred inheritance be trodden down, much besides will share its fall. I have endeavoured to indicate the common ground upon which just men in both countries may take their stand—not ignorant that my opinions will displease many influential persons, both Catholics and Protestants, but remembering that to please by flattering prejudice is no man's duty, and that Truth, if once presented to truthful minds, though by the feeblest advocate, advances by its proper strength and prospers on its way.

VIII

A FEW NOTES ON MODERN UNBELIEF

[The following remarks were supplied by me at the request of a friend, by way of introduction to a work entitled *Proteus and Amadeus*. With that work I had no other connection.—A. DE V.]

THE same error assumes a different character when it recurs in successive centuries. The Materialism of Hartley, a brief and profound refutation of which is to be found in the *Biographia Literaria* of Coleridge, once his ardent disciple, had apparently a purely metaphysical origin. Much of that which has lately asserted itself, has arisen probably from the bewildered though generous eagerness with which the young have watched the rapid progress of Physical Science. Physical Science has no more to do with metaphysics than a piece of iron has with the north star; yet if a piece of iron lies near the compass, that compass is deflected from the north. We are made up of habits; and where an intellectual disproportion has grown up, we dwell upon certain classes of thought to the disparagement of others, and apply exclusively our

favourite methods of reasoning to subjects to which they are but subordinately applicable. Insensibly some specific opinion, though in reality but an accident of our mental progress, acquires a masterdom over us, even while all that is highest within us turns from it with distrust. Of such a danger this correspondence shows an example. "Proteus" comes forward as an apologist for Materialism; while yet many an expression suggests that his deeper sympathies are elsewhere; nay, that he feels, though he does not know, that within the whited outside of that system there may lurk rottenness. He writes in the supposed interests of Science, and forgets Lord Macaulay's memorable remark that no amount of scientific discovery has ever affected, or can ever touch, the great problem of Religion and man's soul.

It would be unjust to assert that men of science have been generally hostile to Religion, though not more unjust than the converse allegation, viz. that the vindicators of Religion have been hostile to Science. Our most eminent men of Science, in later as in earlier days, have been Believers. There are unfortunately at present not a few exceptions;—moreover it is to be remembered that the recent popularisation of Science has necessarily multiplied her camp-followers, a race more noisy and boastful than her soldiers. There are some who assume that between Religion and Science there must be war; who "trample on the pride of Plato with a greater pride;" and who rival an old Neapolitan's enthusiasm

for the last miracle by an equally precipitate acceptance of the latest theory tossed among us by a scientific Improvisatore. It is chiefly among these that we note a tendency to substitute the servile flatteries Science despises for a reasonable service, and to undervalue all Truth except that special sort of Truth which man gains for himself through discovery. Thus it sometimes happens, that when scientific principles themselves illustrate Religion and attest it, many do not observe the fact. Those who in the name of Science argue against miracles as injurious to the dignity of Law, forgetting that "the exception proves the rule," have also questioned the existence of a God, on the ground that physical suffering exists, suffering which, as "Amadeus" well remarks, could not have been banished from man's world of progress and probation, except by the substitution of special interferences innumerable for those Laws of Nature, in detail severe, though on the whole so conducive to happiness, without which both the virtues and the faculties of man must have lacked their training. Those who maintain that "Instinct" is "Reason" do not perceive that, on that hypothesis man would not stand, as they commonly maintain, next akin to the ape, but find a nearer and worthier animal representative among the tribes of Ant and Bee, whose marvellous social polities are images of his own. Those who proclaim that all the countless species on the earth, from the lowest form of vegetable life to man, have been "evolved" from a common ancestor,

of remote but very humble origin, often maintain, no less, that the various families of man are too dissimilar to have been derived from a single human stock. Those who are zealous about "Natural Selection" do not always observe that that principle has its bearings in connection with a great Doctrine of Revealed Religion. The "Survival of the fittest" means that, so long as life has been known to exist, it has been a warfare; and that to a death-struggle of ages hardly imaginable, animated nature owes whatever it has yet consummated of greatness or of beauty. But the Christian creed had also for nearly 2000 years affirmed the "Militant" condition of man; and proclaimed that that condition must precede his "Triumphant" state. The Christian *Idea* thus included the later philosophical one, and may possibly have suggested it to those who first thought of "Evolution," as the Law of animal life, viz. Fathers and Schoolmen, such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, the Christian Idea had one advantage over the later application of it to "Species." The noble Warfare it announced reconciled the interests of the individual with the progress of the race. Every soul, passing from Trial to Triumph, was both a pledge for the eventual triumph of the race, and a help to that end. The Human Kind was on an endless march towards perfection; but each successive generation had not long to wait for its "Golden Year." Those Christian philosophers who first suggested "Evolution" as a

possible interpretation of the Mosaic record, did not regard that theory as a Religious Revolution. Some thinkers who do thus regard it, and who have changed a theory into a creed perhaps a century before its truth can be proved or disproved, may have reason to regret their speed one day.

To disparage Science would be to dishonour one of God's greatest gifts to man. It is to her progress, and that of Liberty, that Humanity looks forward with most trust for her future:—but for their progress, nay, for their permanence, it is necessary that authentic Religion should maintain in the heart of each man, not only a place, but a power proportionate to the power wielded by its noblest rivals, and should advance with their advance. Only in one sense can Religion see an enemy in Science. Scientific truth cannot contradict religious truth, it is often said. Most true; but scientific error can contradict it; and the path of Science ever lies, through error, more or less partial, to larger and purer truth. Before atmospheric pressure had become understood, it was philosophical to believe that "Nature abhorred a vacuum," and to add that her abhorrence extended only to a well thirty-two feet in depth. Science advances the more steadily for her victories being thus tardily won. And yet in the meantime if the credulous acceptance of a scientific theory, eventually shown to be erroneous, should cause the rejection of a single high religious truth by a single generation, the whole of Divine Truth, Natural Religion and

Revealed alike, might thus be lost to the bulk of a nation—perhaps for ever. Those who care *only* for Truth Discovered, as distinguished from Truth Revealed and Truth inherited, have minds too narrow for a serious appreciation of Truth. It is a larger thing than they know.

To the heedless, innumerable circumstances increase the danger at the present time. Archbishop Whately once remarked to me that prolixity exercised a more deceptive influence than all the sophisms classified in books of logic. In our day some ethical “non-sequitur,” which would have been detected at once if compendiously stated, escapes confutation because it is hidden in a work of three volumes. The bulk of the work is on Natural Philosophy; the reader is grateful for the manifold information it gives him, and unwarily swallows some moral or metaphysical inference, so false that it hardly affects demonstration. It is but implied; yet the assumption passes for a proof because it is surrounded by grave scientific details of unquestionable value. A good table of contents might have exposed the fallacy.

Again, it is often taken for granted that an eminent writer on Physical Science must be trustworthy in his metaphysical inferences. As well might we assume that a successful lawyer must be a natural philosopher. I have heard a man devoted to Science assert that the human race now existing, must have existed at least 50,000 years ago, on the ground that certain bones, exactly like human remains, had been

discovered in a geological stratum dating back to that period. He could not be made to perceive that, even conceding the scientific part of his statement, he had unconsciously mixed with it a metaphysical inference for which he had attempted no proof. He had assumed, first, that the bones could not have belonged to some animal race, since lost :—to such a race a bone-structure, more like man's than the monkey's is, would not, even in the opinion of materialists, have imparted the human faculties, in the absence of a brain equal to the human brain. He had assumed next that the bones could not have belonged to a race, intellectual and spiritual indeed, but one whose course had been run before that of man had begun. On his hypothesis, viz. that during many centuries previous to the period of man's existence, as hitherto accepted, the earth was a fit habitation for races more than animal, and in body indistinguishable from man, the existence of several such races before man—or their existence on earth after man's probation is over—would not be improbable, and much less impossible. On the contrary, many persons would say, "We think that the planets are inhabited, because otherwise vast tracts of space would exist in vain : now the waste of vast periods of Time in a single planet, not inhabited by some race with spiritual capacities, would equally be a loss. Should man's race cease on this planet, it will therefore probably be replaced by some new race equal to him in faculties, and possibly like him in body." To

state these alternatives, as *possibilities* and as suggestive of other possibilities unknown to us, is consistent with reason. To affirm their negation, as a *fact*, is assumption. But men who despise metaphysics are always talking "fast" metaphysics without knowing it.

Materialism has moreover this allurements, that at its side are the *reiterated instances*, and those thoughts which carry an image with them. Material conditions alone cannot produce thought ; yet material *conditions*, as well as *causes* derived from a far other source, are necessary for man's exercise of thought, so long as man has a body. Now, observing at every moment how much the intellect is affected by these bodily conditions, many persons confound the conditions with the causes ; and repetition carries the day. Again, the apparent triumphs of matter over mind address the senses as well as the mind ; whereas the distinction between condition and cause addresses the mind only. Matter has thus an unfair advantage in its "dispute with spirit"—one like that of an advocate, who intimidates by his vehemence, and seconds argument with repetition. Spirit, on the other hand, if it challenges us less often, and in a lower tone, approaches us with appeals of deeper significance. A little book called *The Lost Senses*, records the tale of a child called Laura Bridgeman, to whom of our five senses there remained but that of touch. When quite young she was sent to an Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb. Several years afterwards she was

visited by her mother. By slow degrees she recognised certain touches of the hand to which she had been used of old when seated on that mother's knee. She was visibly troubled ; gradually her emotion shook her more and more ; at last she flung herself on her mother's neck. Few narratives are so affecting as this tale—one of many which prove how completely all our noblest faculties and affections exist in those who, so far as the senses are concerned, are immeasurably less endowed than the animal races. In such cases the affirmative proves everything ; the negative proves nothing ; but the negative blusters and reiterates.

The argument of "Amadeus" against the Materialistic Theory in his letters is everywhere urged alike with candour and success. He conclusively proves that Evolution, however easily the theory may be perverted, does not itself oppose Man's instinctive and most reasonable recognition of a *Divine* design in Creation, since mere "Natural Selection" explains, not the remoter *origin* of a species, but its *preservation* ; the whole theory, when it ignores a God, leaving unsolved those three primary problems, viz. the first source of Matter, of Life, and of Law. His remarks on the Beauty of Creation regarded as a note of design are especially striking and original.

The scope of the whole discussion is necessarily determined by the conditions on which it was based. "Proteus" demands the evidence of Theism taken apart from Revelation. The condition surely is arbitrary, and less philosophical than it seems. Theism

is doubtless *distinct* from Christianity ; but things distinct are not always separable. Genuine Theism ever included the hope of a Deliverer ; and historical Theism began with the promise of a Messiah. When Christianity became man's heritage it remained still the primal Theism, though developed and with the Promise fulfilled. It is by the link next the hand, not by the first link, that Humanity must take hold of the chain. In God Incarnate that Divine Image is palpably set forth which, to the mere Theist, was dimly adumbrated. Why should he who inquires after the original discard the completed picture for the first faint outline ? To resemble the Theist of old times, we must, with Plato, turn our face loyally to *all* the light accorded. It was the Cynic, not the Thinker, who shrunk from it into his Tub. Had the higher Greek philosophers fancied that they could make religious philosophy "*Broader*" by making it include, not the largest number of deep thoughts, and high doctrines, which man had reached, but the smallest number only, viz. those in which all, including the most captious and the least clear-sighted, agreed, the Greek race, in place of advancing to the acceptance of Christianity, must have receded to the condition of the barbaric races, which were "agnostic" in intelligence respecting things divine, and, for that reason, were idolatrous in their fancies respecting them.

We are indeed informed on the highest authority that Reason is capable, even apart from Revelation, of knowing the primary truths of Theism. But—and

it is important that inquirers should remember this—it does not follow that all Truth thus cognisable by man will be discovered by each individual man, no matter under what conditions he may arbitrarily choose to institute his search. If he discards the trodden road it is not certain on that account that his strength and skill will carry him to his journey's end, even though practicable by-paths through the jungle unquestionably exist. The Copernican System is a thing discoverable by the human mind : it has actually been discovered ; and the knowledge of it has made its way, by the help of authority and of good sense, to the unscientific. It is not to be inferred that any particular individual, no matter how high his talents, who chose to renounce provisionally all scientific authority, and all methods of thought except such as he had himself selected, would be able to rediscover the Copernican System. The same difficulty may arise in our inquiries respecting the primary truths of Theism, if we let go what was once ours by inheritance, not by discovery.

It is the unreasonableness of Self-Will, not any aspiration of the Reason, that tempts us thus to disinherit ourselves. In Revealed Religion we learn, not only the true character of that God affirmed by Theism, but also the true character of man's being, and consequently the nature of those conditions, moral and spiritual, without which his intellectual energies, setting up by themselves, and in artificial separation from his total being, can learn of God, per-

haps not much more than an intelligent domesticated animal learns of Man. If the intellect needs bodily conditions for its external work, philosophy might well anticipate what to some philosophers seems a scandal, viz. that it may need, not less, the recognition of certain *spiritual* conditions, when grappling with its highest themes. The allegiance of the lower to the higher, in man's nature, is at least as natural as that of the higher to the lower. The moral and spiritual conditions under which alone (this is the very hypothesis of Revelation) Religion consents to impart to the human Intellect the highest part of its dowry, constitute a subject which to no truly philosophic mind can seem trivial. Those conditions include most of the virtues, the manlier as well as the tenderer, and chiefly Humility. This is what Science might have been the first to anticipate, since she begins with strictly analogous demands. The man of Science addresses the man of the Senses with a warning that there is no "pride of knowledge" which is not exceeded by the pride of ignorance. He says to him, in the words of St. Augustine, "'So receive these things that you may deserve to understand them.' You assure me that you see the sun move, and feel that the earth stands still. Be not too confident. You are mistaken in both particulars. Science does not reject any aids to knowledge; but she appeals from the senses alone to the senses *co-operating* with a higher power: and the greatest of scientific men said he was 'a child on the seashore picking up pebbles.'"

It does not seem less reasonable that Religion should say, "There is a third region higher yet than those two of the senses, and of science ; and its apparent contradictions are apparent only. It has mysteries *because* it is Religion, and deals with the Infinite in the interest of man's Spirit. Let the Reason, in union with those senses, to which it has taught the advantages of a noble subordination, look forth upon larger worlds, through the telescope of Faith. This is *not* to close her eyes." Such is the doctrine of the Newtons and the Bacons. It will remain for ever attested by Bacon's "Student's Prayer,"¹ the reproach of too many who claim to be his heirs, but are not his sons.

As regards the lesser men of Science, some of whom not only doubt, but deny, a God, one cannot help thinking what a stir would be made by one of them if—*Theism having never been heard of before*—he had himself just begun to grope after the discovery, but through appliances exclusively scientific ; marvel after marvel, and mystery after mystery, and attribute

¹ To God the Father, God the Word, God the Spirit, we pour forth most humble and hearty supplications ; that He, remembering the calamities of mankind, and the pilgrimage of this our life, in which we wear out days few and evil, would please to open to us new refreshments out of the fountain of His goodness, for the alleviating of our miseries. This also we humbly and earnestly beg, that human things may not prejudice such as are divine ; neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, anything of incredulity, or intellectual night, may arise in our mind towards divine mysteries. But rather that by our mind, thoroughly cleansed and purged from fancy and vanities, and yet subject and perfectly given up to the divine oracles, there may be given unto Faith the things that are Faith's. *Amen.*

after attribute, dawning slowly upon microscope or spectroscope !

In these days, when so many destined for greater things are unwilling sceptics for a time, it may be well to call two things to remembrance. The first is that, though Religious Belief is *certainly*, not probable opinion, it is not a certainty based on mathematical deduction, which would destroy its moral worth, but a certainty not less absolute and more vital, based on the joint action of Faith and Reason. The second is that, if all things are disputable, this arises, not because all things are doubtful, but because the versatility of the human mind is endless. An argument for and against the existence of an exterior universe, or even as to Personal Identity, might, if the opponents were equally matched, be carried on, like a game of "Cat's Cradle," for all time. Eventually we have to decide to what part of our mental and moral being we will trust ourselves ; in what part of it we will dwell ; on its heights, or in some noisy suburb, or infected "Ghetto."

IX

SOME REMARKS ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE RULE OF FAITH

"PRIVATE Judgment," the modern Rule of Faith, has for three centuries had possession of not a few countries abounding in arts, sciences, historic associations, genius, and industry. It has had many aids to which it had no original claim, including the institutions raised by Catholic piety for the maintenance of learning and the increase of knowledge, the traditional habits of races disposed to correct the aberrations of the head by the wisdom of the heart, and to retain as much of their inherited religion as was not absolutely incompatible with their new principles of investigation; and, above all, it has possessed the great standard of orthodoxy held up by the *Orbis Terrarum*, and in part by the Greek Church, which, though wholly unswayed by Papal influence, has ever attested in its separated state almost all Roman Catholic doctrines. Yet with these aids, as well as its own resources,

including State-patronage, the sanction of public opinion, a general sway over literature, unexpected sources of information and aids to criticism, it has failed to produce a scientific, a consistent, or a durable theology. To deny this failure would be as disingenuous as to affirm that Private Judgment is inconsistent with liberal institutions, or with commercial progress. Let disputants say what they please, common sense can judge of facts; and the world knows by this time both what Private Judgment can do, and what it cannot. Those who most respect it value it on the ground of its favouring freedom of thought, rather than of its embodying, in any consistent form, the results of profound thought on the subject most worthy of thought.

It has not only failed to build, but also to preserve. It bequeaths less than it inherited, and its patrimony daily wastes like the prodigal's. Many sacred principles were clung to by the early Reformers, in which their descendants no more believe than in the "traditions" rejected by them. Most of the first Reformers contended for orthodoxy on the Trinity and the Incarnation, and at least professed to hold, on those cardinal subjects, the faith of the first four Councils. To how many would not the decrees of those councils now seem needless subtleties, or contentious dogmatism? On the subject of the two chief Sacraments the belief of the many has become attenuated, and in countless cases all definite belief has vanished. The *opus operatum* of the Sacraments was denounced in the sixteenth century; in the

nineteenth how many believe that Prayer derives its efficacy only from the reaction of the mind on itself, and therefore that to pray for external blessings is unworthy ! As the Infallibility of the Church was in the sixteenth century denied, or reduced to an equivocation, so now the Divine inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture have met the same fate, to a large extent, and in that land chiefly which was the stronghold and birthplace of the first Reformers. The "dogmatic principle," for which the early Reformers were willing alike to persecute, or to undergo persecution, is itself trembling in the balance ; and the pious too often endeavour to persuade themselves that, in discarding it, religion will flourish all the more as a Sentiment and a Worship when it has thrown off its burthen. Not only many of the objects of faith are believed in no more, but Faith itself stands shorn of its divine attributes, and degenerates into Opinion. The very essence of divine knowledge has thus admitted the taint ; and supernatural things no longer need, as many maintain, to be believed with a supernatural certainty. In the language of the day, Faith means acquiescence without certainty, not spiritual certainty without scientific demonstration. Change follows change unperceived, because names remain unchanged, and because relative position is still retained ; yet the clear-sighted see plainly enough that the question at stake is, not contending versions of Christianity, or even Christianity itself, but Religion, as distinguished from philosophy, and Theism itself *as a*

Religion. That there are revivals here and there proves no more than that the struggle is not yet over:—the tide goes out though each successive wave comes in.

There is here no question respecting such infidelity as exists both in Protestant or Roman Catholic countries, but has grown up and maintains itself by the avowed repudiation of Protestant or Roman Catholic first principles. In all communions Infidels may arise; for the human will is free to co-operate with grace, or to reject it. What the world observes, whether with approval or disapproval, is, that Private Judgment represents a body of doctrine diminishing as centuries go by through a necessity inherent in that rule of Faith itself. It stands thus painfully contrasted with inductive science, which daily adds to its noble stores. In it doctrine, as a consistent body of theology, seems incapable of growing, or even of living;—like inert matter it becomes assimilated by foreign things, such as prevalent philosophies, or political influences. This circumstance cannot be accounted for by any lack either of industry or ability in its professors. On the contrary it has produced many men of genius, of learning, and of zeal. But these are the very men from whom it has sometimes received the severest shocks. They have founded sects for its destruction, not orders for its advancement.

There is no question here with respect to many sublime functions commonly attributed to religion in all ages;—whether, for instance, it should rule nations, inspire arts, mould manners, foster sciences, nurse civil

institutions. For many centuries it did these things : but these are distinct considerations. At least it will be admitted that religion has one function which it cannot abdicate, that of *witnessing plainly for the Truth*. If a certain Rule of Faith fails to do this, the failure should be accounted for. The first question a philosophic inquirer would be disposed to ask himself is, whether the *method* which it adopted for the investigation of Truth in the province of Religion, was sound or unsound. An erroneous method would account at once for Theology being neither able to advance nor to hold its own. We know why the ancients made so little progress in physical science :— they pursued, for the most part, a false method. A method that belongs to one department of thought will not answer for another. Experiment will not suffice where syllogisms are required, nor deduction only where induction is needed. Intuitions will teach us nothing in political economy, though much in mathematics. The fine arts have a method of a more imaginative order. Theology, or the science of supernatural and revealed truths, must likewise possess a method of its own ; and it is probable, *à priori*, that any other method would prove barren, even if it did not create confusion also.

The intellectual method originally improvised in vindication of a revolt already made, claimed to be a great discovery, and was known by the name of "Private Judgment." That was its Rule of Faith, put forward in opposition to the Rule of

Church Authority. As the Rule of Faith is, so must the faith formed by that rule be. If the former be sound, it will lead us into truth just in proportion as we observe it; if it be unsound, it will lead us into error, and eventually so imprison us in a world of false associations that truth itself, seen in a false perspective, must appear to us strange and uncomely. Disappointment was felt before long. The principle of Private Judgment in reality accorded to the individual no more than he possessed before, viz. the use of his own mental powers, and a right to pray for grace in the use of them; while the method by which it instructed him to use them, involved a loss no less vast than that of the aid which the individual was sure to derive, on the opposite Rule of Faith, from the collective faculties of the baptized race, brought together in the unity of the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas was confessedly a thinker as well as Luther or Calvin, but the *method* which he pursued gave him as data the authentic and authoritative conclusions of the whole Christian world up to his time, and imparted to him thus, beside his own mind, another mind as large as that of Christendom. The supplemental use of this larger mind no more involved the suppression of the individual mind, than the use of the telescope involves the loss of one's eyesight.

This brings us to a yet more momentous consideration. The belief in this collective Mind of Christendom, which supersedes, not individual intellectual exertion, but private judgment—that is, merely *isolated*

exertion, was no theory invented in later times for the guidance of theological inquirers, but was involved in the very idea of the Christian Church. If the Church exists at all, it *must* be filled with all truth, simply because it is the Body of Christ, who is Truth itself, and because it is the temple of the Spirit of Truth. If it be also a visible and organic body, it must, by its own nature, manifest abroad that truth of which it is the tabernacle and shrine. This would result from its own essential nature, even though the Church had never been expressly declared to be the "pillar and ground of the Truth," and even though to "hear the Church" had never been proclaimed to be a duty. Given the character and origin of the Church, its infallibility is a necessary deduction. We are too much in the habit of looking on the doctrine of infallibility as though it were a late discovery, or supposed discovery; whereas to believe in it was both the instinct and the necessity of the Church ever since the descent of the Spirit, and the cancelling of the curse of Babel. To doubt it must have involved her in the confusions that would assail a man who doubted his own existence. We are also too apt to look on infallibility with reference to its final end, or one of its final ends, instead of to its origin in the essence of the Church, and her substantial union with Him in whom there is "no darkness at all." We consequently forget that the doctrine of the Church's infallibility, far from being an exaggerated claim, is but a negative, and therefore a wholly inadequate mode of expressing

an attribute essentially positive which must equally have belonged to the Church, whether or not it had the function of constituting the right "rule of faith." Man is invested with certain attributes, in the natural order, which enable him to engage in commerce. The consequence is, that each individual finds himself, and at a comparatively small cost, possessed of the products of the remotest climates. In this lower sense he "inherits the earth," on the twofold condition of exercising his own faculties with honest industry, and also of remaining obedient to the laws of human society. But whether he rejects or accepts what might thus be his, the advantages offered to him result from certain essential laws of society and energies of human nature, which exist independently of him, and of their own special results, and which are involved in the idea of humanity developed into civilisation. An analogous process takes place in the supernatural order. As isolated individuals, or barbarous tribes, are organised into the unity of nations and of civil society, and as from that union each unit becomes an inheritor of what belongs to the whole, so also all nations, nay, humanity itself, as renewed and reintegrated in the mould of the second Adam, have become invested with a finer unity, and reappear in the form of the Church, universal at once, and one.

In that archetypal and perfect form of society are found the chief characteristics that belonged to the lower forms of society, *but with a proportionate elevation.* In

the supernatural as in the natural order, combination produces power. The combination of natural energies produces commercial wealth, and that of natural faculties produces *probable* knowledge as the ordinary guide of life. Combination, in the supernatural order of society, which is founded not on creation but on the incarnation, is that which receives the august name of the "Communion of Saints." From that fountain flow the treasures of celestial riches, love, prayer, sacraments; and for that reason we gain thence that certain and divine knowledge which comes by faith, not sense, and which is our guide in the heavenly life. Through the communion of saints, all things belonging to the supernatural order are *in common* among Christians. Their knowledge must therefore, by necessity, be likewise a common knowledge, emanating from the Holy Spirit, who is the mind of the Church, and, passing through the Church, of whom He is the living bond, to the individual. The Church is not an aggregate of individuals; nor a mere collective name for that aggregate, but a living body, the Mother of the Redeemed Race. The individual Christian is born of the Church. He is grafted into Christ by being sacramentally grafted into His body in baptism. From that body, which *has* sacraments because it *is* the great sacrament (the Sacrament of Emmanuel, "God with us"), he continues to draw his sacramental life; from its circle are radiated the charities which feed his heart with divine affections; its authority represents to him the media-

torial sceptre of Christ, its Head, even as mortal parents, in the natural order, are an emblem of God as a Father: and, by parity of reasoning, its light is his light; its knowledge has illuminated him from his childhood up, and imparted to him the Christian faith long before he was able to judge or decide for himself. A mirror of divine truth had thus been created in the world; a mirror in which all lesser mirrors had been melted down, that they might put on a nobler unity, and in which all individual aberrations had been corrected. A mind had thus been created, such as the mind of unfallen man might have been; a mind world-wide, in which the prejudices and limitations of individual minds, as modified by race, climate, or local accident, had no place. It was the mind of the second Adam imparted to the race not only redeemed by Him, but restored, remoulded, and reconstituted in Him. Such a mind was capable of receiving in its fulness and purity the Christian revelation; therefore, the Gospel and the Church of Christ were sown by the same hand and at the same time, and grew up inseparably. A Body in which the Holy Spirit dwelt personally, was capable of understanding those Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit, and also of preserving those sacred recollections which the Holy Spirit was sent to call to its mind. Therefore, when the Spirit was given the Church arose in her strength; and in the might of the same Spirit the Church has ever since combated the world, the flesh, and the devil, competent equally to impart spiritual

graces, and to sever between light and darkness by the definition of disputed truth.

Of this doctrine—one so important that the *mystery* of one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church finds its place among the primary mysteries confessed in the creed—a particular inference relative to “Private Judgment” was but the smallest part. “Private Judgment” was practically superseded by a common judgment, more sacred and more certain in proportion as “the truth as it is in Jesus,” excels the truth as determined by the caprice of individuals, who bear contradictory testimony respecting it. Private Judgment was also of course negatived wherever it was in opposition to the witness of that Church which, from the beginning, had “spoken with authority, not as the scribes,” and had ratified her confession by the words “it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and unto us.” But it is equally true that the opposite principle, that of authority, did not exist simply or chiefly as a Rule of Faith, or for any controversial end. It could not possibly have been eliminated from the mighty dogma of which it was but a part, or rather a resultant. To establish “Private Judgment” as the Rule of Faith, must necessarily be to abolish the very idea of the Church as a divine Mystery, and living power, the organ of Christianity.¹ Conversely, to restore the idea of the Church, however faintly that idea has looked forth at first from ritual or ordinance, has ever eventually produced more or less a distrust in, or a con-

¹ See Moehler's *Symbolism*, and Dr. Klee's *Manuel des Dogmas*.

tempt for, the high-sounding but barren fallacy of 'Private Judgment.' Considering, then, that this new Rule of Faith could not displace the old one without destroying also a vast deal more besides, nay, uprooting a whole system of doctrines hitherto believed in by nearly all Christendom, and attested by countless passages of Holy Scripture, it must surely have seemed to us a duty, had we lived at the time of the revolt, to have tested severely the fundamental norma on which it rested.

Tempus non occurrit Ecclesiæ. As God can never change, so neither can His truth, or His covenanted mode of revealing it to us. Consequently, what would have been our duty three centuries ago is equally our duty now; and whatever would, three centuries ago, have been our certainty or our uncertainty concerning divine things until that duty had been faithfully performed, the same must be our certainty or our uncertainty now. That the worldly or the proud should not be disturbed by the present far-spread and avowed uncertainty, is not surprising; but few things attest more a delusion deep-rooted and pervading, than the circumstance that even the devout and sincere are so often lulled in a fatal security concerning the very foundations of their faith. Environed and imprisoned by an erroneous tradition, and blinded by cherished associations, multitudes, the cardinal principle of whose religion is inquiry, are contented practically to follow the authority of some sect which denounces authority, and make no real

inquiry as to that principle, the rule of faith, on which, notwithstanding, by their own admission, the whole of our knowledge respecting the will and ways of God, as revealed in Christ, must depend. Accustomed to the absence of certainty, they do not feel its loss. Neither the differences between them and their friends who accept the same rule as their guide, nor their own changes of opinion from day to day, awaken them to the fact that they have never really thought out the question of the Rule of Faith. Like her of old "whom the everlasting thunder lulls to sleep,"¹ they repose in a charmed rest; and the syren that subdues them is no spirit of harmony, but the storm of "public opinion," or the crash of systems crumbling ever back into their native chaos.

If a man of a philosophic mind were once to place himself outside his inherited system, and divest himself of prepossessions, what would be his mode of conducting religious inquiry? First, as a traveller begins with his map, he would *map out the subject of inquiry*, not taking now this road, and now that, as caprice or accident determined, but clearly ascertaining by what mode of access a subject otherwise beyond man could be approached. If he found that avenue to truth to be the "Rule of Faith," he would close his ears to all whispers likely to check his progress up the heavenly mountain—all whispers about matters irrelevant, or beyond his present powers of rightly estimating them. If he did not make the Rule of Faith

¹ See the *Antigone* of Sophocles.

the sum-total of his inquiry, he would at least make it the initiatory and principal part. To that question he would address himself as he would to any new *method* proposed to him for the prosecution of scientific, historic, or moral inquiry. He would begin by ascertaining how far the proposed method corresponded with the subject-matter of inquiry. If that method was inductive, he would inquire whether the subject-matter admitted of experiment. If it consisted in introspection or analysis of "what is deepest within us," he would inquire whether the subject-matter belonged, like mathematics, to the region of intuitions, or whether it included facts also. Above all, he would endeavour to ascertain how far the proposed method was consistent with itself. If it involved self-contradictions he would be sure it could not be sound or scriptural except in appearance.

Few things impressed me more when studying the question of the Rule of Faith than the absence of all serious teaching relative to the Method to be pursued in theological thought by Bacon. It must in his time have been with thinkers the question of questions ; yet our greatest writer on Method, and a man gravely religious, seems to have shrunk from the subject. The ground beneath his feet felt unsteady, and the great chancellor

"Dallied with his golden chain,
And, smiling, put the question by."

The Inductive Method in Theology, except when used but occasionally, and in subordination to the Deductive,

must needs seem a hybrid and a monster, for the same reason that a theological method would be such in Natural Philosophy, *i.e.* from want of conformity between the Method and the subject-matter submitted to it. Yet the only alternative method must have been that Deductive one used, as all admit, by the Church during those early centuries when the great Doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were protected from innovation. The primary Verities, immutably fixed in her mind, were to her what Axioms and Postulates are in Mathematics; and the Church, in making her Deductions from these, was guarded from error by the indwelling Spirit sent to her at Pentecost, and abiding with her for ever, not only to recall all things to her mind, but also to lead her on into all Truth.

For the investigation of this subject, *viz.* "Private Judgment," considered as a "Rule of Faith," the following tests would seem to be just and appropriate. The failure of that rule when tried by but one of them, would hardly be compatible with soundness in the rule.

1. If the Rule of Faith be the Bible only, as interpreted by the individual, then this rule must itself be clearly authenticated from Holy Scripture.

2. The rule must have been acted on in those primitive times when, as the Reformers affirmed, Christianity was purest.

3. The "Reformed" theology must itself be practically based on the observance of its own rule, not on the violation of it.

4. We should know from Holy Scripture, not from Church authority alone, what books constitute the canon of inspired Scripture.

5. We should possess, independently of Church authority, a guarantee for the substantial authenticity of the original manuscripts, and a safe mode of ascertaining the true text.

6. The substantial fidelity of our translations should be also guaranteed to us with a reasonable certainty, yet independently of Church authority.

7. Our rule must provide a means of interpreting Scripture truly.

8. It should enable us to reach the larger and deeper meaning of Scripture, as well as the narrower and more superficial.

9. The rule must itself be a distinct and unequivocal one.

10. It must be one consistent with the propagation as well as the maintenance of Christianity.

11. It must secure us from the admixture of grave error with truth; and thus impart the faith in its purity as well as in its fulness.

12. It must guard us from all fatal errors in ritual as well as in doctrine.

13. Our Rule of Faith must consist with faith itself, and with the development of those virtues which have their root in faith; with a real belief in a supernatural world, in the objective truth of Revelation, and in the hallowing influence of divine Knowledge.

Let us examine but a few of these tests. Respecting

many of them countless learned tomes of controversy—critical, scriptural, and historical—have been written. We are here only concerned with those tests, but little controversial, which relate to the Philosophy or Idea of a “Rule of Faith” in harmony with the needs of Christian teaching, and the essential character of the Religion taught. In dealing with this great question we must separate what, however important, is yet irrelevant from the relevant. The real question at issue is not the dignity of the Bible, which the “Private Judgment” affects to exalt, but which it disparages, just as we should inferentially deny the depth of a river if we asserted that it was possible for a child to wade across it. The question is not its sacredness, which surely cannot be denied by that Church which has ever retained the whole canon, and asserted its plenary inspiration, but is solely one respecting its special office in the Church. What God has given for one purpose cannot be made by the will of man to discharge a different one. If it be abused, the right use of it will be missed, and the blessing forfeited. The point in question is, What are the conditions which God has appointed for its profitable use? Many, indeed, will often naturally think that Catholics do not read the Bible frequently enough, since they may forget that it is for edification, not in order to originate his creed, that a Catholic reads it, and often do not know how large a portion of the Breviary, Missal, and most Catholic books of devotion, consists of Holy Scripture so arranged that the mere relative

position of passage with passage diffuses over the sacred text a light such as proceeds from the countenance of her alone who ever looks on God. No doubt numerous Catholics would gain much if they read the Bible more. To such it might impart a manlier faith and an insight more keen, as their pastors often tell them; but the Rule of Faith, like the Faith itself, must remain always the same.

There are, it is true, a few texts upon which Private Judgment finds something like a support. Their real meaning is well brought out in the following passage:¹—

“First, he quotes the words of our Lord (St. John v. 39), ‘Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.’ But where do these words contain a command from God, bidding all men to read the Bible, and assuring them that the Bible is a sufficient guide into all truth? Our Lord bade the Jews examine the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for that they testify of Him as the promised Messiah; and as soon as they had recognised Him as such, they should at once listen to His words, receive His doctrine, and obey His commandments. . . . He made the same use of the Scriptures as Catholics do in speaking to Protestants at this day. The Catholic says to Protestants, ‘Search the scriptures,’ for these are they which testify of the Church as well as of her head; they expressly command you to ‘hear the Church,’ and declare that she is ‘the pillar and ground of the truth.’ You ought

¹ *Clifton Tracts.*

therefore to listen to her voice, receive her doctrines, and obey her commandments. Our Lord bade the Jews examine the Scriptures for a *particular* object :— is this the same thing as commanding Christians to examine the Scriptures for every object? He sent them to the Scriptures as testifying of Him the Teacher, to whom, when recognised, they were to submit. Because the Scriptures testify plainly to the appointed teacher, the Church, does it therefore follow that it sets forth all other truths so clearly, as that you should need no other teacher but it? Nay, does not the very contrary conclusion follow?”

“ But we are sometimes reminded that the Bereans were expressly commended by one of the writers of the New Testament, because we read of them, in the Acts of the Apostles (xvii. 11), that ‘ they were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.’ Surely, however, no one can pretend to argue from these words that the Bereans made the same use of the Holy Scriptures as Protestants insist upon nowadays. The very contrary can be clearly shown by an examination of the history. For what was the real state of the case? St. Paul had ‘ reasoned with them out of the scriptures ; opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom he preached to them, was Christ ’ (ver. 2). If then they would

listen to the preacher at all, they would do no other than search the Scriptures ; for it was precisely this to which he had directed their attention. . . . 'Many of them believed.' But what did they believe? Did they really believe only what St. Paul was able to prove to them out of the Old Testament? for you must remember that this was the only part of the Bible then in existence. . . . If so, they could not even believe that Jesus was the Christ, since this could not possibly be proved out of the Old Testament, every word of which had been written long before Jesus was born. . . . Even so a Catholic Priest, at the present day, might open and allege the Scriptures of the New Testament in argument with a man who acknowledges their authority, and he might show that our Lord established a society which was to endure throughout all ages, even until the end of time, and that He gave this society power and authority to teach all nations all things whatsoever He had commanded."

The scriptural claim of authoritative teaching challenges at once the reader of Holy Scripture if not prepossessed by a modern tradition. "The kingdom of God," the constant subject of our Lord's parables, means simply His Church ; and a kingdom, by necessity, exercises authority. "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe whatever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even

unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." . . . These are texts which a long series of ages and nations, of Fathers and of Councils, believed to apply not less to the Apostolic Church than to the Apostles, and yet which assert or imply a principle the opposite of Private Judgment. "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man, and a publican." "That good thing which was committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us." "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach them to others also." "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of Christ." "*We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*" "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle." These are a few among the passages to which the Fathers had constantly appealed against the self-will of heretics in early times, and when innovations were proposed far less important than the inauguration of a new Rule of Faith, or the expurgation of doctrines admitted by all to have been included in the Church's teaching during far the greater part of her existence. How

were such passages met? They were too often ignored, or taken separately, not in their cumulative force, and reduced to nothing by the same spare and minimising system of interpretation by which Unitarians evade the force of the texts relating to the Holy Trinity.

The primary law of the Church, as an organic body, is its Unity. It could otherwise bear no witness to Truth. It is one because its Head is one, because the Spirit which guides and rules it is one, and because its Faith is one. Being a visible body, its Unity must be as visible as its Apostolicity; and for this provision was made by the supremacy of St. Peter's See. To this supremacy many most momentous texts refer. When Peter was first called his special function was marked by a change in his name analogous to that made in the case of Abraham. "*Thou shalt be called Cephas.*" When the time was fulfilled our Lord addressed him again, and said, after Simon had confessed the Messiahship of Christ, "I say unto thee that *thou art* Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." So far from the privilege of Peter being identical with that of the other Apostles, because in some instances the Apostolic College, in union with him, received some functions which to him only were committed singly, the difference between him and the rest is distinctly expressed. Our Lord tells him that Satan had desired to have them (in the plural) that he might sift them as wheat: "but I have

prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not; and thou, when thou art converted, *strengthen thy brethren*." Again he is asked three times, "Lovest thou me *more than these?*" before to him is committed the rule of the whole flock, "Feed my sheep, Feed my lambs;" a distinction being here as plainly marked between him and the other Apostles, with reference to his love, as in the previous charge with reference to his faith. Entering on his sacred charge, Peter opens the commission of the Gospel to the Jews. When the Gentiles are to be admitted he, not St. Paul, initiates their reception. Peter takes measures for filling up the Apostolic College, by asserting the necessity of choosing an Apostle in the place of Judas. Peter works the first miracle. In the first council, after no small dissension and disputation, Peter speaks, and judgment is given accordingly. Throughout the New Testament, wherever there is a list of the Apostles, the name of Peter stands at the head of that list. How is it that these texts, with many readers of the Bible, mean nothing? Are they not far more striking, when taken cumulatively, than the texts adduced to prove either that Episcopacy, or the institute of Presbyters, is of perpetual obligation in the Church? The Visible Unity and the Authority of the Church are not accidents. They enter into the Idea of the Church. To ignore them was but the sad necessity of times when the "One Faith" too was broken up, and Nations or Kings affected to make creeds.

As regards the second test, so far from the Religion

of those who belong to Bodies that affirm Private Judgment having been really based on that principle, it has practically been based on that of Authority so far as it has been a life and not a battle-cry, though of a most imperfect authority. In all the sects the successive generations have followed more the tradition of their forefathers, and the authority of their ministers, than any real conclusions of their own minds on divine matters beyond the reach of men without learning. "Private Judgment" remains indeed answerable for many of the heart-burnings, sometimes denounced under the name of "The Plague of Controversy;" but in the sects themselves the more beneficent influences of Religion worked up unperceived from the ground of Authority. The more respectable sects retained the primary Creeds which expressed the Authoritative Judgment of the Church. Children received their Faith on the Authority of their parents, and of those Authoritative Creeds, especially the Apostles' Creed. To say that they received it only *provisionally* would be to cast an exaggerated stigma on the sects. It is true that when those children became mature, they may have deemed themselves entitled to investigate for themselves those later and less momentous doctrines respecting which the sects differed, and so far to "cast aside all prepossessions." But thus to act with respect to the primary doctrines of the "Apostles' Creed" would have been to become Unbelievers on the chance of recovering a faith provisionally abjured. No parent himself a sincere Christian but must have

denounced such a course as Apostasy. Yet without this the youth's maturer studies and meditations respecting his childhood's creed could not have been the real *formation* of his Faith. It was a wholly different thing, viz. the illustration and the confirmation of a Faith already formed. Every day believers investigate what yet they do not regard themselves as licensed to doubt: they do so to deepen a faith irrevocably theirs, to confute its assailants, and to protect the imperilled: but they know also that to admit a willing doubt as to the Christian Faith, which belongs to man only through Divine Grace, is to "quench the Spirit," and to murder Faith on pretence of ascertaining whether it was ever worthy to live. "Private Judgment" has thus only escaped detection because it has not been fairly tried by two successive generations. It has been but the limestone broth—nourishing when seasoned with the meat of Authority. All who believed that children were to be brought up as Christians, and not as nominal Christians but as the best Christians, might well have suspected that, however needful and honourable a manly Private Judgment may be in man's outward life, as when an individual refuses to sin with the multitude, it could not have been made the "Rule of Faith" in things divine. He might also have inferred that if "Authority must needs mingle with faith," a Divine Authority must have accompanied an Authentic Revelation; and that to that Authority man's successive generations owed a direct and entire, not an indirect and incomplete, obedience.

So far from Private Judgment having been the Christian's guide in primitive times, there was then no adequate object on which it could have been exercised. The last book of the Bible was not written till the end of the first century. The canon of Scripture was not determined, and the authentic books discriminated from the spurious, till after a second century had passed away. It was therefore impossible that the Bible, as interpreted by the individual's private judgment, should, in those early times, have been the Rule of Faith. To suppose that the early Christians were what is now called "Bible Christians," is as preposterous as to assert that the Greeks and Romans used artillery in their warfare. The guide of the primitive Christian was the Church, which obeyed the apostolic injunction to Timothy, and kept safe the deposit of Faith. Particular Epistles, and whatever other portions of Holy Scripture existed in particular Churches, were frequently read aloud and expounded to the faithful. It is thus that the modern Catholic also is taught, except that the Missal and his various books of devotion commonly contain a far larger portion of Scripture than was accessible to the early Christian.

After the disputes concerning the doubtful books had been settled, and the canon fully determined, it was as impossible as before to act on the novel Rule of Faith. God's providence had not yet given to man the art of printing; and there are more Bibles in one Catholic city at the present day than existed in a large province of the old Roman empire. So it continued

till the art of printing was discovered. It was thus in the time of the martyrs. It was thus in the time when the great general councils were defining the Christian faith. It was thus when the nations of Europe were successively evangelised. It was thus, not by man's neglect, but by the providence of God. Holy Scripture, far from being neglected, was faithfully preserved, assiduously copied, employed for the purposes of instruction, profoundly studied, meditated, commented on by the most learned fathers and schoolmen. Yet, in these heroic ages of faith and love, no one dreamed that Private Judgment was the interpreter of the Bible.

The Greek schism never admitted the rule of Private Judgment. It arose at that hasty revolt self-styled a reformation. Under the pretence of exalting the Bible, the judgment of the individual was exalted as the interpreter of the Bible. Two principles which have nothing in common were thus connected by a verbal equivocation. But even then it was impossible to carry out a maxim which nature as well as providence disowns. It was necessary for every man to have a Faith ; while not one in a thousand was capable of forming a theological creed for himself. A few men, accordingly, wrote commentaries on Holy Scripture, and drew up so-called confessions of faith ; and, later, men became vehement in defence of the new traditions thus originated. Universal education is obviously among the pre-requisites for Private Judgment. It is not till within the last century that any serious thought has been bestowed on the education of the masses ;

and even yet but little sound progress has been made in that enterprise. Should it ever be accomplished, the problem will remain as far as ever from solution. The young, the larger portion of the human race, will present an obstacle as insurmountable as the poor do now to Private Judgment.

Above all, we should require, if Private Judgment were our guide, a Scriptural guarantee that those who use it will be rightly directed by it in their interpretation of Scripture. It is a poor sophism to point to those texts which affirm that all Scripture was given for man's instruction. All this is insisted on equally by the Catholic Church ; but the question is, by what key the casket is to be unlocked. It is vain to say that, though the mind of man is naturally weak and blind, it is yet enlightened by the Holy Spirit ; for all this likewise is but a fragment of admitted Catholic doctrine. The point at issue is, whether the Holy Ghost, "who spake by the prophets," and through Whom alone they are intelligible, be given to the Church, and to the individual in union with and in subordination to the Church ; or be given to individuals separately, and irrespectively of their devout submission to the Visible Body of Christ. According to Catholic teaching the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Church ; and though individuals can neither think one good thought, nor do one good action, nor spiritually discern the truth, except through His aid, yet that aid is accorded only through their union with Christ their Head, from Whom and from the Father

the Holy Spirit ever proceeds; nor can individuals maintain union with that Head, except through union with His mystical Body. Whatever be the covenant which God has made with man, it is according to that covenant alone that man can claim the Divine gift. Surely it is not difficult to distinguish between the value of a gift and the right use of it. If the Church's teaching constitute a part of the system God has instituted for our instruction, to discard her authority, on the ground that the Bible is sufficient by itself, must be as wanton an act of will-worship, as though we were to discard the Epistles, on the ground that all necessary lights may be found in the Gospels.

No one can be united to truth in its more spiritual forms who despises it in the humbler form of Fact. Experience has tested Private Judgment. A Rule of Faith which, in place of certifying faith as to what it is to believe, sanctions equally opposite forms of belief, is as clearly a failure as a key that will not open a lock, or a knife that will not cut. A rule which bends in the hand of him who applies it is no rule.

The allegation that Private Judgment only fails from lack of devotion in those that use it, is contradictory to fact. The Puritans and Anabaptists were probably as fervent in prayer as innovators of a staid character, and beyond most others insisted on the doctrine of grace. Luther, who asserted the Real Presence, in a form of his own devising, and Zuinglius, who denied it in all forms alike, are both held by their followers to have been "men of

prayer.”¹ Who will take on him to say that Dr. Channing, though a Unitarian, did not seek divine aid in the exercise of his private judgment, as well as Dr. Chalmers, and Dr. Chalmers as well as Dr. Pusey, though the last justly deems the Apostolical Succession one of the notes of Christ’s Church, and the former two were no believers in the “Sacramental system?” Do not the Quakers believe in the teaching of the Spirit? and have they not the Bible also? Yet they believe that it is the Living, or Inward Word, not the Written Word, that is to guide us. A Sectarian may say of his brother that he differs from him because he has not the Spirit, and is not a child of God; but he cannot prevent a rejoinder being made in the same words, and with precisely the same show of reason. It is worth observing here that a violation of charity is forced upon the Sectarian by his rule of faith, to which a Catholic is never tempted. A Catholic is never either called upon or permitted to judge an individual, because he cannot tell whether any particular person be or be not excused by an “invincible ignorance” of the truth—that is, by an ignorance the result of circumstance, and not proceeding from the will. The Sectarian, on the other hand, is obliged either to give up the sufficiency of his Rule of Faith, or to account for its failure by the as-

¹ The fact that men who have recourse to God in prayer, arrive at opposite conclusions, in no way contradicts the promise of Christ, that if we ask we shall receive (Matt. vii. 7, comp. James i. 5); because prayer has its conditions, *e.g.* humility, obedience, faith, etc.—*Clifton Tract*.

sumption that none of those whose belief differs from his own on fundamental points, possesses those dispositions without which no one can see God. True charity is exercised towards the individual solely, not towards the doctrine. Sectarianism is forced to be latitudinarian as to doctrine, up to a certain point, and, beyond that point, to be uncharitable to the individual. Not less vain is the plea that men who exercise Private Judgment devoutly differ only in matters not "fundamental." Such is not the fact.

Let the Apostles' Creed, or any other imaginable summary of leading truths, be put forward as comprising all "fundamental doctrines," and the same inherent fallacy will be found in that plea. There is no philosophy under it. When we assert that the Creed is true, do we refer to its letter or its meaning? If to the meaning, then we assert that no one can in reality hold the Creed who wilfully denies what is legitimately deduced from it, and obstinately maintains a contrary doctrine.

Multitudes, it is sometimes answered, have gone to heaven without having ever heard of deductions from articles of the Apostles' Creed. Doubtless; but multitudes are also saved without an *explicit* knowledge of several articles included in that Creed. It is hard to say what is the least amount of *explicit* knowledge which may, in special cases, be necessary for salvation. The reason of this is, that the whole Faith exists latently in but a small part of it, if rightly received. The whole Law was pro-

pounded to man in one Commandment. Perfect love to God is the keeping of the whole Law. But, on the other hand, to offend wilfully as to any part of it, is to offend in all. The whole Faith was virtually included in St. Peter's confession ; but that confession would not have been the true faith relatively to St. Peter, had he refused to accept any doctrine really contained in it.

By essential doctrines of Christianity is meant, not that which may possibly be sufficient for an individual, a quantity which must vary according to circumstance, but that which suffices for the general Body of true Christians. In this sense essential truth cannot stop short of the *entire revelation of God*, as already defined, or as the necessities of future times may require its definition. If, for instance, heretics professed to accept the article, "Who spoke by the Prophets," but yet restricted Inspiration to the Prophetical Books of Holy Scripture, and if ampler definitions were resorted to by the Church to vindicate the authority of the whole Bible, could it be conceded that any one rightly understood that article of the Creed who refused to admit it in the ampler sense of the Church? Faith belongs to the will as well as to the mind ; and if the will believes rightly, the mind must believe with more or less of detail, in proportion as it is instructed. Ignorance relates to the mind only : denial to the will. The Unity of the "one Faith" is forgotten where the Unity of the Church that witnesses to it is ignored.

To say that a part of what we hold is essential doctrine, and a part is not, amounts to this, that a part of it is faith, and a part is opinion ; that a part is divine, and a part human ; that a part is revealed religion, and a part philosophical conjecture. Now, the latter part, in this case, not only cannot be an essential part of the Christian faith, but cannot be any part of it. The object of Faith is Revelation. It must surely be necessary to believe in the whole of what God has revealed and authoritatively propounded to us ; and it can be no duty to believe in aught beside. A faith, part of which is divine, and part human, carries with it a " body of death," which must infect the nobler part. Simplicity of faith cannot be attained by believing no more than the Church had defined before denial rendered definitions necessary. As well might one hope to make a man child-like by cutting him down to the dimensions of a child.

The theory of fundamentals regards the Christian faith not in its Idea, but mechanically, as though it were a bundle of separable notions, instead of being a Truth at once one and manifold, potentially contained in a single statement, yet capable of being indefinitely expanded. It reduces the Church to the littleness of the individual, instead of imparting to the individual the stature and the faith of the whole mystic Body. It affects to give us false immunities, while, in fact, it deprives us of divine privileges. The same faith may exist implicitly or explicitly when we recognise a Teacher sent from God ; but a mere

abstract faith in that which, for the very reason that it is a book, and therefore impersonal, can never test our sincerity by requiring us to accept in detail what we profess to accept generally, is hardly scriptural faith. The Bible is not the print and paper, but the meaning of the Sacred Book. If instead of discerning that meaning, we contemplate in the text but our own reflection, finding in Holy Scripture simply what our several acquirements or associations have enabled us to bring to it, have we not reason to fear that we have thus changed the Word of God into the word of man, and destroyed, by mis-using, the divine gift? The Spirit is one, and the Word is one, and the Faith is one; but the religions which men profess to extract from that Word, by the aid of that Spirit, are so many, that the disputants cannot answer the question, "What is Christianity?" Well may the humble and loving Christian exclaim, "They have taken my Lord away, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Private Judgment is bound to discard every deduction from a text which does not follow from it by a sequence apparently almost self-evident. The mind of the Church, on the other hand, can interpret on a wholly different principle, being free from the disturbing influences that affect isolated individuals. It deals with Holy Scripture accordingly as the Apostles do, sometimes deducing from texts meanings not drawn from them by an absolutely obvious and necessary inference; in other words, seeing a meaning where

an uninspired eye could see none. This is the reason why the Church is sometimes accused of false reasoning, the fact being, that she often refers to a text rather as a motto than as the basis of a logical argument. From texts even the most vague she can draw certain conclusions, because she brings to the study of Holy Scripture that complete faith and spiritual mind which alone have the gift of discernment. The mere individual, on the other hand, is morally forced to discard all texts that are not plain. That which is to him practically the Bible becomes shrivelled up into a small space ; and the Bible of his neighbour is in words alone the same as his.

.. The rule of Private Judgment can thus deal only with the surface of the Bible. Holy Scripture is a book of unfathomable depth, as well as of boundless riches. It is possible that not its shortest chapter has yet been wholly explored. A single text is often so many-sided that it reveals meaning beneath meaning, as it is more and more deeply searched. For this reason the mystical interpretation of Holy Scripture has ever been insisted on by Catholic theologians, as well as the literal. But if isolated individuals are to interpret it, they cannot trust themselves to a method of interpretation which, in that case, would be the work of fancy alone. Who, for instance, could have felt certain, on his private judgment only, that the passage of the Red Sea was a type of baptism, that the history of Isaac and Ishmael stood in a symbolic relation to the Law and the Gospel, and that certain

passages from the Psalms referred especially to our Lord? It is the Apostolic Church only that can interpret Scripture according to the profounder method of the Apostles and yet with the same certainty. The contradictions of commentators on the book of Revelations sufficiently prove that the mystical interpretation, when carried out by individual caprice or imagination, is as unsafe a guide as omen and augury: yet through the literal meaning alone the early Christian converts could hardly have discovered the new dispensation in the books of the Old Testament.

A comprehensive and manifold appreciation of Holy Scripture, like a deep one, is incompatible with the Rule of Private Judgment. No text of Scripture can be explained by itself alone, or with the aid of the context alone. It must be compared with other texts in other parts of the Bible. It might have pleased God to have presented us with all truths of moment, and all important moral principles in a compendious form, as in a creed, or a catechism, but it has pleased Him to do the contrary. The great truths of religion are found scattered over the whole Bible. Nay, those truths, owing to their very greatness, are divided and subdivided, a portion being expressed in one text, while another portion of the same truth is to be found elsewhere. Thus, in one place, we read what might make us think that faith only is necessary, in another we learn that baptism is also a part of the Christian covenant. One set of

texts instructs us that Christ is God, another that He is man also. Figurative expressions are sometimes used, and in other places words which, if acted on exclusively, would lead us into superstition or error. The confusion which must result from not distinguishing between the literal and the figurative, or from not combining texts which are mutually supplemental, is not guarded against by any provision made in Holy Scripture itself, simply because God has given us another guide also. If we reject that guide we endeavour to sail without a chart. What right has a sect to affirm that the words "This is my body" are to be taken figuratively, just as "I am the door" is a figurative expression, if it condemns the Socinians for in like manner explaining away the plain words of Scripture, rather than believe that Christ is God? Who can affirm that the words, "Drink ye all of it," addressed to the Apostles alone, make it invariably the right of the laity to receive the cup if the charge, "Do this in remembrance of me," does not equally give them the power of consecrating? Who can affirm that the prophecy about Antichrist refers to Christian not pagan Rome, and that the prophecies in Isaiah, describing the Church in its visibility, its universality, and its unity, do *not* refer to the Roman Catholic Church? How can Private Judgment know that a parallel exists between the destruction of the brazen serpent and that of the images of the saints, yet be sure also that no analogy exists between the dispersed tribes who refused to worship

at Jerusalem, and who, in losing unity, lost the faith also, and the sects which have set up rival altars? Who can be sure that Judah, selected from his brethren, and endowed with a promise fulfilled centuries later, and that by means which many might have thought human and accidental, was not a type of Peter selected from his brethren, and commanded to strengthen them? What is to be our guide in these matters? "The general tenor of Scripture," it will be answered. Just so. But on this principle a previous knowledge of the whole must determine the interpretation of the parts. Now such a knowledge is actually possessed by the Church, for she bears witness ever to what she had seen and known before one book of the New Testament was written. Individuals, on the other hand, who refuse to communicate in the divine knowledge of the Church, can become acquainted with Holy Scripture only by proceeding to a knowledge of the whole from a knowledge of the parts—that is, from a knowledge of what, on their own confession, must remain unknown. Men frequently speak as if the "general tenor" of the Scriptures were a thing easily understood, whereas a real appreciation of it, and of the general "analogy of the faith," is among the last attainments of the most instructed Christian. What a Sectarian mistake for this broad knowledge is his own particular theological theory or prepossession, which is to him a key for the elucidation of all doubtful passages. The rule of Private Judgment, then, is essentially a

narrow, a superficial, and a random method of interpretation. If we use it we may lose not a portion merely, but far the larger portion of the meaning of Holy Writ. The draught which we secure must depend on the net which we use ; and if we prefer our own to that of the Galilean fishermen we must take the consequences.

Philosophy, once more, requires what polemical necessities shrink from owning, viz. that a Rule of Faith must be an unequivocal one. That of Private Judgment has ever been equivocal. In theory each man is by it invited to form his Faith for himself ; but, in fact, when his private judgment happens not to coincide with that of the community to which he belongs, he has been too frequently persecuted by the State, and almost always is denounced by his minister as schismatical, or, at least, disloyal and unfilial. This is obviously unjust, for, on the principle of Private Judgment, a dissenter must have at least as good a right to abandon the national Church as the early Reformers had to abandon the universal one. The most contradictory theories prevail also as to the nature of Private Judgment. The principle is commonly asserted in its most unmixed form ; but attempts are made to combine it with that of authority. The theories respecting this mixed authority are contradictory no less. Sometimes the authority means that of some particular national or established community over its own members. Such authority must, of course, be limited where the claimant to it does not also claim infallibility ;

but whether the line of limitation is to be drawn by the sect or by the individual, no one can say. At other times the theory of authority means that the inquirer is to stand perfectly free as regards the decisions of any existing community, but that he is to take into account the judgment of ancient Fathers and Councils in determining his own. What Fathers and Councils, however, he is to consult, especially when unlearned, on what principle he is to interpret them, and how far he is to be guided by their opinions except where they coincide with his own, the advocates of this theory have never determined. All such contending theories are, indeed, in one respect fatally identical, since Private Judgment, if admitted at all, must ever sit in the *ultimate* court of appeal. Private Judgment thus is not one rule but several, just as it results not in one religion but in several, with a common attribute of uncertainty—that is, among men who think.

A true Rule of Faith must be consistent, not only with the maintenance of the Faith, but with its propagation, as a very small amount of philosophy suffices to prove. Now the consequence of Private Judgment is to produce rival creeds, and it is utterly impossible that the heathen should be converted permanently, or on a large scale, by a religion propounded to them in contradictory versions. The sects differ, as we have seen, about matters regarded as essential by the contending parties. Such is the case even in the opposed schools included within the same establishment. To deny the “sacramental system” is heretical in the

opinion of High Churchmen, and to assert it is "soul-destroying" in that of Low Churchmen. It is impossible, then, that a compromise should be made on such points, and equally impossible that the pagan world should be brought to agree permanently with those who cannot agree among themselves. Again, where no organic principle of unity is recognised as the source of mission and jurisdiction, it is impossible to prevent the missionaries of rival sects from ultimately occupying the same ground. Our Lord's prayer for unity among all who followed Him, a unity which He compares to nothing less than that subsisting between Himself and His Father, was based upon the desire "that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me;" and the connection between the success of missionary enterprise and unity in the Faith and in the Church is obvious. Who can seriously imagine that even if the heathen nations could be evangelised, they could be retained in the Faith by a religion consisting only of a doctrine or a sentiment, without a priesthood, an ecclesiastical rule, or a worship uniform and divine? If the Hindoos were converted, could the Christian faith be maintained among them by the principle of Private Judgment, and a church which to them must appear little more than a great Bible society? Would this suffice, also, for the Buddhist, the Mahometan, or the African races? It was not thus that Europe was evangelised; nor is it by the principle of Private Judgment that the missionary of any sect maintains whatever success

attends his efforts. He cannot, however, discard his principles at will, or prevent them from producing their natural results; and accordingly we know, on the authority of devoted missionaries, that the disputes among Christians are among the chief obstacles to the propagation of the Gospel. A momentary truce (were it, indeed, possible to attain peace by the sacrifice of truth) could, at most, produce but a momentary good. If the rival missionaries are to co-operate on a common principle, that principle, it is certain, must be the one upon which alone permanent unity of Faith, and Faith unmixed with error, is conceivable. The contrast between the magnificent contributions of England to missionary work, and the smallness of the results, is a deeply pathetic thing.

Above all, a Rule of Faith, if true, must be consistent with the full exercise of Faith, and with the harmonious development of the other Christian virtues. In this respect the rule of Private Judgment is so defective that if all acted upon it who imagine that to it they owe, under God, their religious knowledge, the very idea of religious faith must long since have perished. Private Judgment, by engendering contradictory opinions in matters of faith, practically denies the *certainty* of faith. It is, therefore, forced to ascribe to the principle of faith itself deficiencies inherent only in the individual not yet strong in faith, or placed in circumstances under which the complete exercise of faith is to him impossible. No sensible man will believe that certainty can belong to doctrines

which are the perpetual subject of dispute among the best and ablest men he knows, and all of whom invoke the aid of the same Spirit, while they apply the same Rule to the same subject-matter. Common sense can recognise simple facts in spite of evasion: and an appeal as sharp and short as, "What then meaneth this bleating of sheep in mine ears?" will need as a reply something more than a stereotyped phrase about "agreement in essentials." Confronted by contradictions, yet shrinking from the abyss of conscious infidelity, theological belief declines from certainty to probability; and too often those alone feel positive respecting their religion whose temper makes them equally positive concerning other matters not the subject of revelation at all, as, for instance, their own individual salvation, or the truth of their political convictions. When certainty has ceased, the rock on which the fabric of the Christian life should be reared crumbles into sand. Another and less sincere class of thinkers affirm that they are certain with respect to their conclusions, but that others may be equally certain of opposite opinions; and that no one has a right to brand his neighbour's opinion as erroneous. This is to substitute intellectual taste for conviction, and practically to deny, not only the certainty of faith, but the objective existence of Truth itself. Truth upon this theory would be relative, not absolute, like sensations; and Theism and Atheism would stand upon the same level. A third class throw themselves on the inner light of Reason, as the Puritan throws him-

self on the Spirit, affirming that Reason is a universal endowment incapable of deceiving. But the philosopher of this school cannot deny that revealed religion includes matters of fact, as well as ideas of the pure reason, and that reason, far from being able to determine respecting facts long past, cannot always prove that the ideas included in its own province possess an actual as well as an ideal existence. Neither can he shut his eyes to the fact that other persons, possessed of the same universal gift, have arrived at conclusions exactly the opposite of his own ; and that his own convictions have also varied, as to the gravest subjects, at different periods of his mature life. Once more, even though reason were indeed infallible, the isolated individual must be capable of misusing it ; as when a man makes some fatal mistake in casting up a sum in arithmetic. He has, therefore, no means of determining whether it is he or his neighbour who is under a delusion. This species of uncertainty would be our condition in mathematical science itself, if its professors arrived at opposite conclusions. In all these schools alike, then, Private Judgment tends to lead even pious men, though reluctantly, in the direction of scepticism, disguised under the alias of "Breadth" or of "Charity."

To return to our primary theme—the Church's authority as the Rule of Christian Faith. That high Idea is misapprehended because the authentic idea of Faith itself has been insensibly subverted. It has "suffered a sea-change," but not one for the better.

Divine faith is a theological virtue, and a supernatural gift which enables man to believe and confess with a knowledge, obscure in kind, but absolutely certain, the truth which God has revealed, and on the ground that God has revealed it. The intuitions of reason never could constitute divine faith, because, however certain they may be, as in mathematics, the faculty is not a supernatural gift infused by the Holy Ghost; and the knowledge it imparts is not accepted on the ground of its being revealed by God. For the same reason the knowledge derived from the senses belongs not to Faith, whether such knowledge be certain or uncertain. *Human* Faith, likewise, another mode of knowledge, being founded on merely human testimony, belongs not to the order of divine grace, and thus differs essentially from the gift of divine Faith, although it exercises its own subordinate part in sacred things, as well as a principal part in the affairs of ordinary life; holding in the natural order a place in many respects analagous to that which divine Faith occupies in the supernatural. From all these modes of knowledge divine Faith differs; and likewise from that of Vision, which belongs to the kingdom of glory. Faith comes to us by grace, and with the co-operation both of the human mind and will, to both of which it belongs.

But how is Christian faith exercised? This is a question of measureless importance. It has ever been exercised after one and the same fashion. For the exercise of Faith we require *two* things;—the

internal grace itself, and an external guide, either God Himself, or a prophet commissioned by God, and challenging us in His name—a prophet by whom that gift of faith may be directed to its proper objects, since the devout disposition alone could not suffice. It was thus that our Lord stood up among His disciples, and that the Apostles, when the Spirit had descended upon them, at once appealed to, and directed, the faith of the early Christians. They still continue to address us through that Apostolic Church, Catholic, and yet One, in which the unity of the Apostolic College, united ever with Peter, lives and rules. Without the internal grace the external guide would exist in vain; and without that guide the grace must remain dormant. When we call the Church “Apostolic” we do not merely refer to the Apostolic Succession: we mean that her teaching is like that of the Apostles who did not fear to say, “It hath seemed good unto the Holy Ghost and unto us.” That Church confesses Christ, speaks with His authority, and thus challenges Faith, proposing to man its one appropriate object, viz. the Christian Revelation in its completeness and its purity. The whole doctrine is thus held, either explicitly or implicitly, and unmixed with error; it is held as revealed by God; and it is held by a supernatural faith, which thus lays the foundation of the supernatural life. Reason does its part, for it vindicates the divine origin and authority of the Church and the Sacred Scriptures by means of historic testimony, and evidence external and internal, as complete as such reasoning admits,

and as stringent as that which determines our actions in matters of human duty or interest, where the will is not averse. The rest must be done by Faith, which crowns and authenticates right reason, just as grace consummates nature; and the exercise of Faith is rendered practicable by the presence and challenge of the Apostolic Church, as the divine Witness of a truth delivered once for all, and as its commissioned expositor. We are addressed, it is most true, as reasonable beings; but *for that reason* not as beings for whom reason is sufficient. Faith is the attribute of God's *reasonable* creature alone. The mission of the Church is evinced to reason by the "Notes" of the Church, as well as by its teaching, its miracles, and the miracle of its sustained existence—just as the mission of the Apostles was evinced by their miracles and by their teaching. It was, of course, always intellectually *possible* to attribute those miracles to evil spirits or to imposture: and it is equally possible now to meet the claims of the Church by remarking that false Churches have also claimed to speak in God's name. Were such a rejoinder not possible, revelation would be *scientifically proved* by reason alone, instead of resting on a Faith of which reason supplies the intellectual *motives*.

We thus perceive the fallacious character of that argument which affirms that even an infallible Church would be no certain guide to us, if its claims were not demonstrated by a process of such scientific rigour that no man could resist it. Equally sophistical is it to urge that if the individual can decide for him-

self on the claims of the Church, he must also be competent to form true opinions on all other points of theology. As well might we say that whosoever can select a safe guide must have sagacity enough also to find his path across the mountains without a guide. Religion is built upon faith: but faith needs certain conditions for its exercise. It is now as it has ever been. Now, as in the apostolic age, an object is presented upon which faith, if it exists, is capable of finding a resting-place. The Church comes to us as sent by God. We recognise her claims at once humanly by reason, and divinely by faith, because God, who has commissioned her, imparts to us the gift of faith, through which we can exercise the grace of spiritual discernment. That the individual should believe as she believes, animated as he is by the same Spirit, no more implies a bondage than that the hand should obey the brain. God gives the faith: the Church, through the Communion of Saints, directs it. The same divine Spirit acts at once in the Church, which He seals with His holy unction, preserves in unity, and leads into all truth, and in the heart of the individual, which He kindles, illumines, purifies, and delivers from the tyranny of self, of sense, and of "the faculty judging according to sense."

It is not, then, the ultimate uncertainty alone in which an inquiring mind is left by the rule of Private Judgment which proves that rule to be inconsistent with Faith. The *method* it involves for the attainment of knowledge is not that of Faith. For Faith

it strives to substitute a principle of quasi-scientific inquiry, directed to the book of revelation, not that of nature, for its subject-matter. Let us consider this method on its moral side. As long as we are instituting a merely intellectual inquiry, we must keep our minds in a state of judicial *impartiality*. While, therefore, we are thus labouring to ascertain whether there are any sacraments, and what is the true doctrine of justification, we are all the time exercising on those important questions the virtue, not of Faith, but of impartiality. Who is to inform such a Christian student as to the limits between inquiry and infidelity? Let us assume that in youth he was taught the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. May not "Private Judgment" challenge him to call those mysteries in question as if he had never heard of them before? During an inquiry in this sense impartial he is a sceptic, not a Christian; and he is little likely to reach the virtue of Faith through the habit of unbelief.

The Sects frequently think that Faith is exclusively the faculty of spiritual discernment, which is but one of its attributes, and not always the one earliest developed in its completeness. Submission, self-abnegation—these are also qualities implied in the exercise of true Faith. As little children only can we enter into the kingdom of heaven, and as such only can we abide in it, and advance in it. Opinion *asserts*; Faith *confesses*. Assertion includes *self-assertion*. Confession acknowledges God by forgetting *self*. God only can rightly assert Himself: in man, who is but a

Creature, such a habit is based on delusion, and involves the sin of pride, in a form the more perilous for being latent. Pride is the very instinct of Reason, when it claims to decide by itself in divine things. In taking self alone as a ground of spiritual knowledge, and as our sole guide to God, man, as it were, creates his own creator. The higher we soar, the more we need humility. For this reason the intuitions of Faith are allowed to remain obscure on earth though certain; and docility, as well as spiritual discernment, belongs to Faith. Christianity reveals to us the doctrine of a divine sacrifice and a divine condescension; and it is only through this discipline of self-sacrifice and self-abasement in the contemplative as well as in the practical part of man's being, that such a doctrine can be brought home to his heart and mind.

It is humility that imparts this character to faith; and humility itself is maintained in us by obedience not to God only, but to God's messenger whether human or heavenly. The sin of the fallen angels is believed to have consisted in their refusing to worship God in His Incarnation, when that mystery was prophetically revealed to them: and in men also the trial of humility is not seldom to obey one who is girt with infirmity, yet bears the Divine seal. Docility is always, in Holy Scripture, the attribute of faith. Such docility will often look like credulity; but it is thus that everything Christian wears a double aspect, as seen by the Christian or by the world. That is no Christianity which escapes its reproach. Sects which

despise Christ's words must despise His Church also, and those among His servants who most resemble Him. They class His Church with impostors, because false religions, or corruptions of the patriarchal religion, have also claimed that authority which must, as the instinct of the human race ever felt, be an attribute of the true one ; and they appeal from it to the Bible, forgetting that the false religions have claimed their sacred books as well as their sacred priesthoods. It is thus that they class what they fancy the credulity of the Catholic with that of the Hindoo ; ignoring the fact that Holy Writ is full of examples of that which might seem credulity, had not Divine Providence and Divine Grace, the two Hands of God in the world, been pleased to co-operate in leading the humble and believing to divine truth. It was thus that the Apostles followed our Lord at a word, and that those who heard them sometimes desired that the Apostolic shadows might pass over them, and were cured of their diseases. Docility is an initiative form of divine faith. Through it we come to Christ as little children ; and, in the Christian, the child lives ever on in the man. The martyrs did not lack spiritual discernment ; yet none were more remarkable for docility and the spirit of submission. It was Arius, and the other heretics, who ridiculed their humility as superstition.

The will, as well as the mind, is the seat of faith. To the latter discernment belongs, to the former submission ; accordingly that only is heresy which includes by act or omission the sin of the will ; and con-

versely a belief which does not include the submission of the will is unprofitable, even when it chances to be sound. The authority of the Church is the organ through which Divine grace, shed abroad in the heart, trains man in the habit of submission. Obedience is not a principle merely, to be learned by precept, but a habit to be taught by providential circumstance and divine institutions. It is thus that our moral being, in its own inferior sphere, is shaped and moulded not by precept only, but by circumstance, such as the claims of the civil power, parental rule, social traditions, the weakness of childhood, the limitations of knowledge, the need of joint action, and therefore of subordination. Private Judgment excludes the corresponding discipline in the spiritual sphere. It plays fast and loose with faith, accepting the Divine Book but reserving for self the right to interpret it. Now, apart from the consideration that the same will which accepts the Bible rejects other gifts authenticated as divine by that very authority, it must be remembered that a book, though divine, is a book still, and can discharge that office only in the covenant of grace which God has assigned to it. When questioned, a book often answers with the voice of the questioner himself. It cannot prevent him from mistaking for a divine voice the echo of his own. It cannot correct his misapprehensions, divide between the dross and the sterling metal in his interpretations, abash his presumption, restrain his precipitation, disclose the tenor of the whole before he has mastered the parts,

prevent him from selecting texts according to the law of a false theory, and from distributing the subject-matter of inquiry by the method of an erroneous tradition. It cannot prevent him from finding in it what he brought to it, and trampling under foot the truths or the admonitions he most needs. It cannot enable him to distinguish between the Written Word and his own version of it, between the "mind of the Spirit" and his own mind; and therefore it cannot authenticate his own convictions, even when most firmly held, with that seal of Divine teaching, through which alone they acquire the merit of *faith*. The loss thus sustained, is not less than infinite. The strength of the chain is the strength of its weakest link; and a divine book, with but a human interpreter, is not a *Divine revelation*. The principle of Private Judgment thus intercepts, by the interposition of a fallible medium, the direct communication between God and the spiritual mind of man.

Still more fatally does the same principle affect the Will. If a country without judges or rulers possessed laws, together with a vast legal literature for the interpretation of them, a literature expounded by the private judgment of individuals, habits of loyalty could never be trained, though every citizen became as learned in the intricacies of the statute-book as village attorneys deem themselves now. Through the instrumentality, on the other hand, of the Church, the mind of the Christian is made subject to a regenerate will, and that again to the Will of God unequivocally

expressed through an interpreter, speaking "with authority." Every fresh accession of knowledge is a fresh act of submission; and, literally, "every *thought*" is thus "brought into the obedience of Christ." The faith thus generated is seasoned and vivified by all the affections of the regenerate heart, which are addressed by the Church as by a mother, and trained for their noblest function—that of being the handmaids of faith. The Apostle addresses his converts as "my little children, of whom I travail again till Christ be found within you." Thus are still addressed the children of her only who claims apostolic authority, and who does not fear to command them in Christ's name. A book cannot thus address us, nor an institute, however venerable, if founded on Private Judgment, or human authority—perhaps on one that denounces as blasphemous the claim to infallibility. In the Church obedience rises to a *sacramental* dignity, by being directed to God, through an external Representative, His symbol, and His organ. Through such obedience the insight of faith is exercised without danger of human or demoniacal delusions, the latter class pre-eminently dangerous in these "spiritualistic" days. Through such authority the Church is able to show love toward her children by giving them safety and peace, not by surrendering to them seeming privileges, which are not hers to give. Therefore it is that her children love her; and that those who have ever loved her most, and most prized her authority, are those recognised even beyond her pale as her saints—those who

have had the deepest insight into the "glorious liberty" of the Gospel.

The rule of Private Judgment divests faith likewise of its vitality, and its power, by chilling the ardour of strong minds. In such minds the freezing sense of insecurity, produced by the impossibility of discriminating between faith and imaginative illusions, will reduce the religious sentiment to a low and sordid tone, mistaken for the "golden mean." Enthusiasm will, in such circumstances, commonly be the attribute only of the light and injudicious; and as such it will do as much harm as good, for in religion, as in all things, no substitute can be found for good sense. A community which cannot eliminate doubt from its theological creed has its vulnerable point, and feels it. Heroic virtue it half fears as a peril or a temptation. It has admitted the formula of nature into the region of supernatural truth, and substituted "Peradventure" for "Amen." It becomes at once reduced and transposed; and its very truths lose their substance while they retain their name. Its raptures are but poetry, its dogma but theory, its antiquity but pedantry, its forms but formality, its freedom but licence, its authority but convention, its zeal but faction, its sobriety but sloth. Such a faith must needs abdicate and install reason in the supreme place. Such a Church may not rule; for it cannot rule by serving.

Private Judgment has its own sphere: but when it sets up a "Rule of Faith," it has lost sight, not

only of the vastness and depth of Holy Scripture, and of revealed Truth, but of the pervading and multiform nature of that Christian virtue of which faith is the root. Faith has not only a special function with reference to the justification of the individual, but is also the universal bond between the redeemed race and God. It must therefore affect the whole soul, and be the health of every part, penetrating all the virtues, and imparting to them its own unity and stability. It is an adamant which God diffuses through man's whole being. It must enlighten the mind, erect the will, warm and purify the heart, live in every affection, kneel in our humility, endure in our patience. It must from the first contain the element of the infinite, yet admit of infinite increase. This cannot be its character if it boasts that it needs not the brethren, that it is entitled to its own share of the family inheritance, and that it can act for itself. Such a faith soon finds itself feeding among the husks.

The existence of a cycle of supernatural virtues, all founded upon faith, and constituting the Christian life, still maintains a traditional place in the novel theology, yet little belief is reposed in that Heroic Sanctity which is the practical embodiment of all those virtues. Except as correlative portions of one vast system, those virtues have little meaning, and when deprived of their solid foundation they totter to their fall. The various elements of the supernatural world, as of the natural, correspond with each other, and must exist in harmony and due subordination, or

not at all. Faith is the immovable axis of that world ; and the light that illumines the face of that world is the Knowledge of God. Having lost the true idea of faith as an organ of certainty, the modern sects have too generally lost also the idea of the supernatural world which it supports, and of the divine knowledge by which that world is irradiated. Insensibly men have drifted away from a true estimate of divine knowledge, as something supernatural, hallowing, elevating, the source and the health of all the Christian virtues. This is one reason why theology is now disparaged under the name of dogma. Men who would hardly avow as much, regard doctrinal knowledge as but a series of logical positions, at most subjectively true, or relatively useful, the result of much idle curiosity, and the cause of much mischievous contention. Such an estimate would not be unjust if our knowledge of divine things came indeed from beneath, not from above. Speculations which had been useful as an intellectual exercise might well, if of human origin, become a spiritual tyranny, when hardened by time. This low estimate of divine knowledge proceeds from that philosophy which regards *belief*, in religious matters, as a thing less certain than *knowledge*, instead of a thing greater—a knowledge in which an elevated will, as well as a spiritualised mind, bears its part. It is of importance to observe that according to our estimate of Christian knowledge must be our estimate of Christianity as a whole. Doctrine was revered in the time of the martyrs. Why is it not now? It is the necessity of a

half-materialist age to invert the process through which the mutual relations of spiritual and of sensuous things should be regarded, interpreting the higher by the lower, not the lower by the higher. If this spurious method of interpretation be adopted, it must be used consistently. If Faith mean no more than Opinion, the whole Christian scheme must shrink into but a complex piece of intellectual mechanism. The idea of God must dwindle proportionately. His love can be but benevolence ; His paternity but a metaphor ; His justice but an arbitrary formula ; to impute jealousy or wrath to Him will seem but a dream of the envious, or the angry : to believe that He works for His glory, will be stigmatised as imputing to Him human littleness. In short, according to this scheme of inverted thought, God Himself would be but Man, flung to a distance, and magnified by an optic glass ; and all our knowledge of divine things would consist but of human knowledge misapplied. The same fatal error depraves our estimate of religious knowledge in its moral and in its intellectual relations. The same misconception which prevents our regarding divine knowledge as certain, and faith as an organ of certainty, hinders us also from recognising such knowledge as spiritual and vital. A few words will suffice to indicate this truth, though to illustrate it adequately a volume would be required.

If man were to find out God by his proper strength, then, indeed, as man is frail and imperfect, his knowledge of God would by necessity share that imperfec-

tion, and would remain (1st) doubtful, (2d) subjective, (3d) barren. If, on the other hand, man's knowledge of divine things comes from God, it must share the character of God, and be certain, objective, fruitful. Probable knowledge on matters that belong to the supernatural order is not knowledge, but conjecture ; and that such knowledge can never add a cubit to our spiritual stature is a fact which reason asserts, and which faith does not care to deny. Yet there is something in man's lower nature which sometimes makes him prefer the lower to the higher knowledge, and found a boast upon what is, in reality, but the poverty and nakedness of unassisted humanity. His pride prefers the position of a discoverer to that of the recipient of a gift. This propensity is indicated by the predilection in modern times for natural theology, which, more easily than Revelation, can get itself regarded as human discovery. It is the same instinct in a less developed form which, assuming the truth of the Bible, seeks a key to its interpretation in Private Judgment, rather than in the divine witness of the Church. The very boast of this false method is its confutation. Knowledge which, either in its origin, or in our mode of deducing it from its original fount, is merely human, for that very reason is not divine : and if it claims to be religion, it has the fatal defect of not being revelation, just in proportion as it is discovery. It is not difficult to see that the same circumstance which makes such knowledge inconsistent with the essence and true Idea, makes it like-

wise incompatible with the end of religion. If our religious knowledge reached us by the method of empirical science, its results would be empirical; if it were accorded to us through a series of intuitions, like those of abstract science, it would *compel* belief, and so annihilate probation. In all such cases alike the knowledge which comes not from above must fail to lift man's soul to the heights.

But far different is it with that Knowledge which comes from above, of which Christ is the source, and the Church of Christ the channel. Such knowledge of God is an effluence from God, a light sent forth into the face of human kind, from Him the Father of Lights, and from that perfect Manhood which reigns in heaven. Our sunrise is His glory manifested; and this is the reason that it comes "with healing on its wings." It has a spiritual efficacy because it comes from Him who is a Spirit, and who must be worshipped, not only "in Spirit," but "in Truth." It is deiform in character, and therefore it is deific. Its nature corresponds with the Divine Attributes, and transfigures that human intelligence, which indeed is capable of receiving it only because it was itself originally formed after the Divine Image. If it does not include a quality corresponding with the Divine attributes of certainty and fixedness, it must fall equally short of the Divine character in all other respects. It cannot be spiritual, or pure, or eternal, or absolute, like Him, if it be uncertain like us. If, on the other hand, our knowledge be certain, as

coming from God, then indeed it must also be sanctifying.

The knowledge which comes from on high includes properties distinct from those that address the intelligence, as light possesses other qualities, chemical, magnetic, and vital, beside those that address the eye. Such knowledge is therefore capable of constituting an instrument of living communication between the Creator and the creature. This is the reason why knowledge is commonly spoken of in Holy Writ as the characteristic type of religion. The knowledge that comes from man, on the other hand, even though it related to divine things, could no more ripen the harvests of the soul than lamps and torches could mature the fruits of the earth. Such knowledge may be a literature or a philosophy; but it lacks the differentia of religion, properly so called. It constitutes no living bond between the Creator and His creature. It is a biblical literature with those sects whose knowledge of divine things rests but on human and fallible criticism: among establishments it adds a religious sanction to social order: and it glitters, a mystic philosophy, before psychologists who look for God only in their own souls, and who know not that what is *deepest* within us is descried only through the light that comes from above. A Religion it is not, except so far as it contradicts its own Rule of Faith, and as—an undercurrent of ancient and divine tradition flowing beneath the brittle ice of human speculations—it enriches dead opinions with somewhat of the character of faith.

That knowledge of God, then, alone is sacred and sanctifying which comes from God directly and without the interposition of self. It alone is supernatural, and therefore stands on the level of Christianity; is vital, and therefore capable of realising the Christian aim. It elevates and exercises all the virtues. Coming from the heights it sounds the depths, and therefore presupposes submission, not assertion, in the act of reciprocity. It carries God with it in every ray. He it is who exists in those beams, and in each of them, sacramented in light. This is the knowledge capable of expanding into the Beatific Vision as the optic nerve into the retina of the eye. Such is the reward reserved for faith, and the obedience included in faith. Opinion, on the other hand, has no such latent property; for nature, when unaided, or when, for the aids God has given, the aids man has chosen have been substituted, includes no principle through which man is capable of conversing with spiritual realities. Its "little systems have their day," and amuse us while here below; but they cease where mere human forms of perception cease. The world has played with them till it is tired of its plaything; it is now sick of their petty restraints and peevish inconstancy. It suspects the existence of a world mightier than itself, deeper, loftier, more lasting—the supernatural world. It knows that if such a world exists, the way of access to it can neither be found in the statute-book, nor in the volumes of the scribes, nor amid the eddies of public opinion. It remembers that question, "Lord,

to whom should we go?" and sees a significance in the record that Mary found her lost Child when she sought Him in the Temple of God, and not among her kinsfolk and acquaintances.

By some it will be asked, "Is not Private Judgment a manly thing? Does there really remain no place for it?" The answer is this. The place for Private Judgment, or but human faith, is man's total world except that one spot which is too sacred for it, and where Heaven meets Earth. The vast and splendid spheres of man's Art and of Thought belong to Private Judgment; for though there is no department of mature life, private or public, of Art, Science, or Letters, into which the principles of mutual counsel and mutual aid fail to enter, yet so long as it remains with ourselves to decide what counsellors we shall select, and obey, we are still within the domain of Private Judgment. That potentate has been extending his lawful patrimony immeasurably during many centuries, and need the less grudge to leave uninvaded the spot which God keeps in His own hands—that is, the parish church with its altar and its graves. That spot, if annexed, would add little either to man's harvest fields or his hunting fields. It covers little ground, though it points high. It is reserved, not that the hard heir who "strides about the lands," may be amerced of anything which a manly heart would claim, but that through that sacred precinct he may be enriched with a gift greater than all his possessions besides—a gift without which the rest

would neither be secure nor remain blessings while his. Are we robbed of our own because one spot is kept inviolate for the descending feet of those Powers from above who visit our earthly life? We may dispense with lesser gifts, or accept them conditionally; but the knowledge of God is a gift with which man cannot dispense, and which he cannot accept except on God's conditions. Those conditions are that each man should receive it from God, and through Christ's Body which is declared to us to be the Temple of His Spirit, and *as such* alone the "Pillar and the Ground of the Truth." We belong to one Race, the Human; and while we defer to that tie we receive from it as much as earthly life needs, *i.e.* neighbourly help and probable knowledge. But we belong in a much higher sense to God's Church, because the Second Adam in whom it is constituted is Divine as well as Human. Through her, not from her, we have Divine knowledge and the Divine Life. The incorporation is closer, the obedience more absolute, the reward more sovereign. When the Revelation was given the Kingdom was founded. Those whose resolve, fixed and final, is to cling to that Revelation should cling to that Kingdom also.

Luther, the most practical representative of "Private Judgment," though not the most avowed one, is himself eminently represented by his well-known saying that the doctrine of "justification," by which he meant his own doctrine on that subject, one little heard of before his time, is no less than the *Articulus ecclesiae*

stantis vel cadentis, the "test of the Church standing or falling." There is a remarkable connection between that statement and the "Rule of Faith" on which he and his acted. That doctrine which is the test of the Christian Church standing or falling, must surely be that primary doctrine on which the other Christian doctrines depend, and of which they are characteristically illustrations and applications. We know that if in a drawing or map what should stand highest is degraded to a lower place, the confusion does not rest there : the whole must be a distortion. Now the place in Christian Theology which Luther claimed for his Doctrine of Justification is no less than that one which the whole Church, both in the East and the West, had claimed from the beginning for the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Luther had no choice. It was easy for the most uninformed "Private Judgment" to reach by a bound to a strong "sensation of positiveness" on the subject of man's justification ; but it was as impossible for it to reach a genuine "sense of certainty" as to fathom the countless mysteries, respecting the Holy Trinity, which had absorbed the attention of Councils and Fathers for centuries of debate. The Church, when the novel religions arose, stood still on the ancient ways. Her "Rule of Faith" was involved in her existence. It was included in her earliest Confession of Faith, the Apostles' Creed, and also in that Creed when expanded into the Nicene. Those brief summaries included all. Their articles were very few, but very

far-reaching. They confessed one God, the Creator of all things, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with their respective offices—the Incarnation of the Second Person, and the Descent of the Third Person at the Feast of Pentecost—and in immediate connection with these, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church with her offices. The Holy Spirit, *Digitus paternæ Dexteræ*, the finger of the Father's Right Hand, wrote perpetually on the forehead of the Church those august Truths which the Incarnate Son had revealed to the Apostles ; and what He wrote on her brow, she, obeying her Divine Lord's 'command that she should teach the nations, wrote on the heart of each among her children. She who, through the Holy Spirit, dispensed the "one Baptism for the remission of sins" was competent, through the same Spirit, and she alone, to instruct the Baptized. Thus in the sacred Chain of Divine Truth, as well as of the Divine Life, no link was wanting. The Infinite Creator, infinitely distant, had drawn infinitely near to the humblest of His creatures. Between them stood no barrier in the form of mere human opinion ; neither that of authority exercised by separated and opposed bodies which could not teach by the one Spirit ; nor a 'consensus of Fathers interrogated by isolated men of learning, and to whom the simple had no access ; nor that densest of barriers between God the Soul, an overweening Intellect setting up to teach itself when its true place was that of a learner not a teacher. It was indeed the reign of Immanuel, God with us.

X

THE PERSONAL CHARACTER OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

Read at a Meeting of the "Wordsworth Society," 1883.

POETRY is frequently termed a "creative art," and, in a sense, the title is a just one ; but it fails to express one of the most remarkable characteristics of poetry. A history, or a philosophical treatise, may also be termed a creation of human intelligence ; but though a first-class poem is a creation even in a higher sense, standing as it does more remote from what may be called the "handicraft" of the mind, still there remains a yet closer relation between true poetry and the poet. Byron, in one of his best poems, *The Lament of Tasso*, has made the Italian poet speak of his Christian Epic as his "soul's *child* ;" and there is a deep significance in the term. True poetry stands at the second, not the first, remove from a mere manufactured article ; it is less a creation of the poet's intellect than the embodied *progeny* of his total spiritual being. A history may reveal to us little of the

writer ; but the image of the poet is stamped upon great poetry, and stamped the more deeply the less the poet intended that it should be thus impressed. For this there is a momentous cause. It is not a single faculty of the mind that originates a true poem, though the imagination is specially needed for that end : it is the whole mind, and not the mind only, but the whole moral and emotional being, including those antecedent habits and experiences which fitted that being for its task. In this respect the highest poetry has some analogy to religious faith. It is this also which makes poetry such a large thing, and which constitutes the infinite variety of poetry. The circumstances which modify both the dispositions and the intellect of man are ever changing with the ages ; and therefore, even if the special poetic faculty of a Homer, a Dante, or a Shakespeare, chanced to be exactly reproduced after the lapse of centuries, its poetic products would be essentially different. If the second Dante chose to imitate the first, the resemblances would be less than the diversities, for the imitator contented to be a mere plagiarist could never have been a Dante. Had he been a true poet he would have lived a true life, and by that life his genius and its products must have been substantially modified. It is this also which gives to great poetry, and especially to Wordsworth's, its extraordinary influence over as many as enter into *vital* relations with it. They find in it more than beautiful thoughts, vivid images, valuable conclusions, melodious cadences ;

they find these things, and many more, not apart and isolated, but fused into a living and personal union. They find in it humanity, and a diverse humanity. It is their whole being that is challenged by a brother man, and to that challenge they respond.

The faculties of a man, though distinct faculties, yet act conjointly, not separately, and act thus more in poetry than in prose. The greatest poetry possesses most eminently this diversity in unity. It indicates in close union faculties and habitudes, intellectual and moral, which might seem to stand naturally at the farthest distance apart each from each. They are thus united in poetry because they are thus united in man. Comparing poet with poet, we find that the qualities which jointly make up their several aggregates of power have been combined in very different proportions, and according to a different law. This is because in the highest poetry there is not only a human element but also a distinctly personal element. Such poetic personality is not to be confounded, as has been well observed by Mr. R. H. Hutton, with the trivial egotism which is ever displaying itself in mannerisms, affectations, and the other illicit appeals of self-love to unworthy sympathies. It is a personality to be found in the epic poet and the dramatist, who have no opportunity of thus obtruding themselves, no less than in the lyrical or elegiac poet. In this personality the universal poetic type is never lost or merged, while yet the individual type is differenced from other exemplars of poetic genius in its modes of

self-manifestation—differenced by an essential, not an accidental diversity. In no modern poetry is this higher personality so strongly indicated as in Wordsworth's, a proof in itself that he belongs to the first class of poets. It is in his higher poetry that Wordsworth is most eminently himself. Whatever he looks at, he looks at it in a way special to him. When he contemplates Nature, it is as the mystic of old perused the page of Holy Writ—making little of the letter, but passing through it to the "spiritual interpretation." If he regards man, it is not as a busy agent amid the turmoil of life, nor yet as a mere Intelligence "housed in a dream." He regards him rather as a being in whom there unite countless mysterious influences both from the inner world of the spirit and from the visible creation of God, constituting, when thus combined, a creature destined for lofty contemplation, yet bound at the same time by a network of sympathies "descending to the worm in charity." If he looks upon human gladness, his ready sympathy with it is seldom unshadowed by a remembrance of the speed with which joy passes into sorrow; and, when contemplating sorrow, his most abiding thought is that her mission is to cleanse, to elevate, and to make free. He sees good in all things; yet in all good things he sees also some record of a higher good now lost, so that the rejoicing of man seems but the captive's harping in the land of exile. For him the smallest objects have rightful claims upon our deeper affections; yet the greatest are scarcely worthy of man's higher

desires, for the *potential* excellencies in them too often are but "things incomplete and purposes betrayed."

It is easier to feel the strong personality of Wordsworth's poetry than to define critically in what it consists. I have suggested an approximate answer to this question, viz. that it consists (1) in the unusually large number of qualities, intellectual and moral—qualities often not only remote from each other, but apparently opposed to each other—which are represented by his higher poetry; (2) in the absolute unity in which these various qualities are blended; and (3) in the masterful moral strength which results from their *united* expression. This measureless strength was so deeply felt by Coleridge that in his *Friend* he describes Wordsworth's poetry as *non verba sed tonitrua*, and elsewhere spoke of him as "the Giant;" while admirers of a very different sort were but beginning to babble about the "sweet simplicity" of his verse. Wordsworth did a signal injustice to his own poems when he classified them as poems of the "Affections," of the "Fancy," of the "Imagination," of "Sentiment and Reflection." There exist no poems which could less equitably be subjected to a classification so arbitrary. It but points to a partial truth, while it conceals one of primary importance. All of these faculties are doubtless found, though with diversities of proportion, in Wordsworth's poems; but they are almost always found in union, and they are ever marshalled under the control of the highest poetic faculty, viz. the Imagination. *The Brothers, A*

Farewell, "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," *Ruth*, nay, even *Laodamia*, were classed among the "Poems of the Affections;" but there was no reason why they should not have been equally classed among those of the "Imagination," to which, in his later editions, many poems were transferred. On the other hand, "She was a phantom of delight," "Three years she grew in sun and shower," "A slumber did my spirit seal," and *Tintern Abbey*, were placed under the title, "Poems of the Imagination:" but they might with equal justice have been referred to the category of the "Affections;" while the *Lines left upon a seat in a Yew-tree*, *The Happy Warrior*, *A Poet's Epitaph*, "I heard a thousand blended notes," and the *Ode to Duty*, might as fitly have been classed with the poems of the "Imagination" as with those of "Sentiment and Reflection." It is but in a few of Wordsworth's inferior poems, such as might have been written by his imitators, that the higher faculties and impulses are found in separation. In his best poetry the diverse elements of the human intellect and of the human heart are found, not only in a greater variety, but in a closer and more spiritual union, than in any other poetry of his time; and, from that union, rose the extraordinary largeness of character which belonged to it. That characteristic was felt by the discerning, even in his earlier day, when other poets were travelling over the world in search of sensational incidents or picturesque costume, while he seldom sought a theme except among the primary relations of

humanity, and those influences of exterior nature by which human nature is moulded.

The largeness that belongs to Wordsworth's poetry resulted in part from the circumstance that the numerous elements included in the poet's genius were often converse powers, which in an inferior poet would have proved mutually hostile. The intelligential and emotional parts of man's nature are often at variance, and each part has found special representatives among the poets ; but in Wordsworth's poetry it is impossible to say whether the mind or the heart is the predominant power. Again, both in the mind and the heart there are energies of an almost antagonistic nature. What faculties are less like each other than those of meditation and observation? Yet to Wordsworth they belonged alike. He dwelt in meditation, as in a cavern, but one

"Not uncheered
By stealthy influx of the timid day
Mingling with night, such twilight to compose
As Numa loved ; when in the Egerian Grot,
From the sage Nymph appearing at his wish,
He gained whate'er a regal mind might ask,
Or need, of counsel breathed through lips divine."¹

It will, perhaps, be as the inmate of some such holy seclusion that, in future days, those who have taken counsel with Wordsworth will most often image to themselves their master. They will picture him there as bending in meditative trance over

¹ *Ode to Lycoris.*

"Diluvian records ; or the sighs of Earth
Interpreting ; or counting for old Time
His minutes, by reiterated drops,
Audible tears, from some invisible source
That deepens upon fancy—more and more
Drawn tow'rd the centre whence those sighs creep forth
To awe the lightness of Humanity."¹

Yet it is certain that there was nothing by which Wordsworth was more characterised than by a gift the opposite of meditation—that of minute observation. The most delicate effects of Nature are those which he most delights in noting. He marks the autumnal leaves, "unfaded, yet prepared to fade," and listens to the wood-dove when its voice is

"Buried among trees
Yet to be come at by the breeze."

Equally minute is his observation of those trifles by which human emotions are best indicated. Thus, of the deserted wife in her silent gloom, he says—

"And when she at her table gave me food,
She did not look at me."

And again of her child—

"Her infant babe
Had from its mother caught the trick of grief,
And sighed among its playthings."

In such passages meditation and observation constitute a single intellectual act. Again, Imagination and Fancy are very different powers ; yet vast and plastic as Wordsworth's imagination is, his poems include a series in which fancy predominates, while

¹ *Ode to Lycoris.*

yet she ever sports under the watchful eye of the nobler power. Again, the intuitive faculties of the mind are commonly contrasted with those of discursive thought: but, penetrating as is Wordsworth's "gift of genuine insight," he is not less remarkable for the accuracy of his logical processes, which communicates to his philosophical conclusions, and to his diction no less, that especial note of *truthfulness* which belongs to them no less than to his descriptions of Nature. Once more, what can be more dissimilar than the creative faculty, the energy of which moulds all things to shape, and the passive power that persistently submits itself to the influences of Nature, till it has taken in her meanings and absorbed her very soul? Early in life he wrote the lines—

"Nor less I deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness."¹

It was this "wise passiveness," this poetic "quietism," that drank in that power which Wordsworth put forth again in the form of creative energy. His "passiveness" meant that profound and persistent *attention*, both of thought and will, of which but the fewest of men are capable. Where a habit of restlessness has destroyed this quiescent power, the resilient power which should alternate with it is dissipated before it is formed, the slender tendrils of thought having been successively snapped off before they had time to root themselves. All profound and authentic power, intel-

¹ *Expostulation and Reply.*

lectual or imaginative, moral or spiritual, is thus stunted. Newton once said that the only difference between him and ordinary men was, that his mind could *attend* longer to a single train of thought. A great poet needs this power no less. Men who value themselves on their intellectual agility can seldom rest upon a thought long enough to profit by it. Between Wordsworth and Nature, and not less between him and that whole body of Truth of which he was cognisant, there were more than such nods of passing recognition,—there was a perpetual spiritual commerce. Thence came the weight, the momentum and living strength of his knowledge.¹

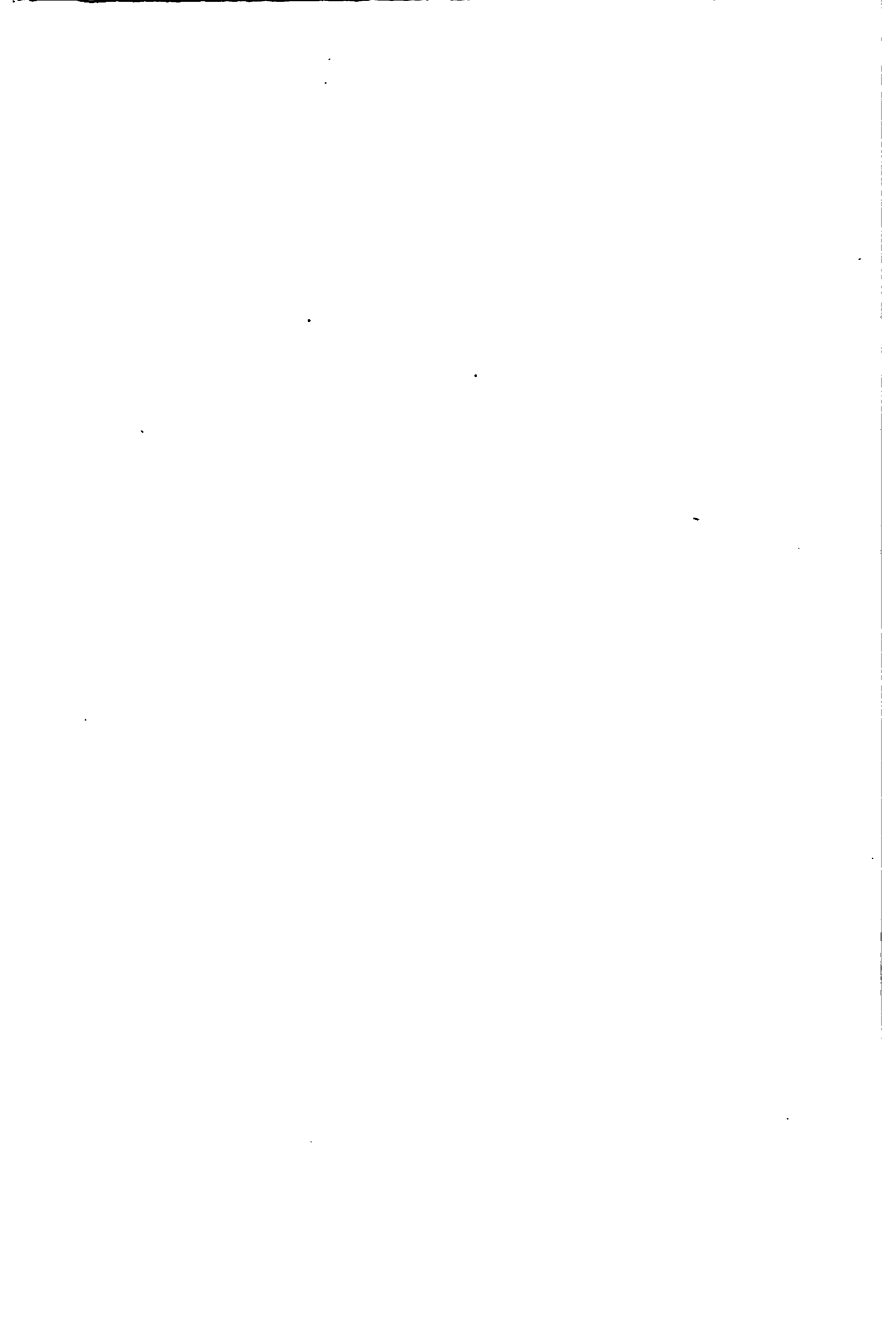
In Wordsworth's genius there were not less intimately combined certain moral qualities often found in antagonism to each other. It has been said that his sympathies were rather *for* than *with* men. There is much truth in this remark. In any case, his sympathies for men must have been held in check by the stately severity of his moral ideals. But a compensation for this restriction, so far as it existed in him, is found in the circumstance that his sympathies for men were almost unlimited, as is marked by the fact that sternly as he condemned the evildoer, he held contempt to be an unlawful sentiment, and but once expressed it in his poetry. On the contrary, he affirms that

¹ Some admirable remarks on subjects analogous to this will be found in Principal Shairp's *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, pp. 47-50.

“ He who feels contempt
For any living thing hath faculties
Which he has never used ; that thought with him
Is in its infancy.”

Two other moral habits often found apart from each other are veneration and admiration. In Wordsworth those two habitudes were most happily united, even as his imaginative soarings and exultations were blended with misgivings, his strong and fearless self-assertion with humility, his general hopefulness of disposition with moods of deep depression, his contemplative calmness with gusts of stormy passion, his recluse and hermit spirit with patriotic ardours. It is the vast number of these “harmonious opposites” united in Wordsworth, and the closeness with which they are interfused, which impart to his poetry those characteristics of magnanimity, of large-hearted humanity, of vastness in unity, of seriousness, moral weight and solidity, which, taken together, constitute what is felt as the personal character of Wordsworth's poetry.

THE END



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